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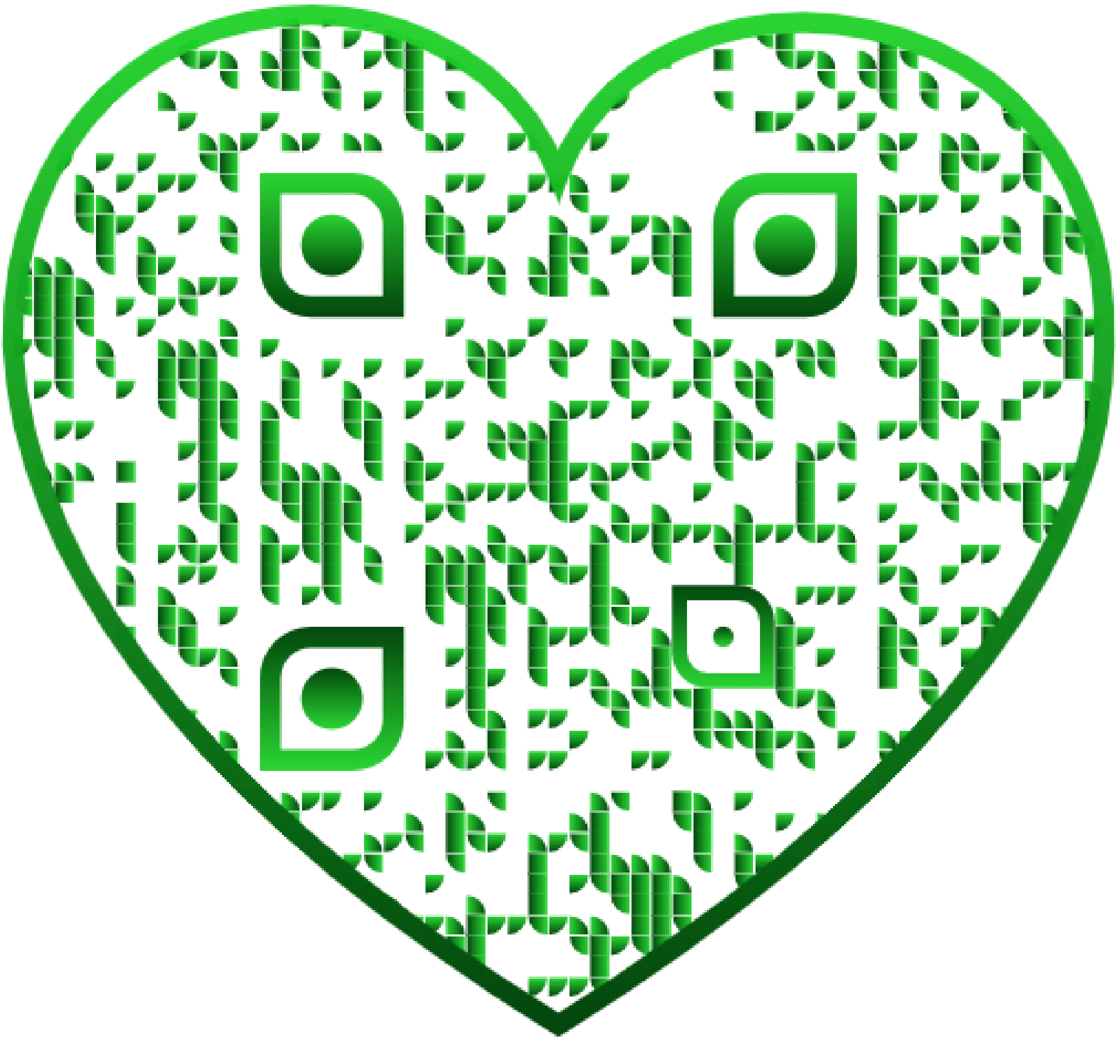

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COMMENT

WHY MORE CAR MAKERS ARE JOINING FORMULA 1

Formula 1 is experiencing a boom and global manufacturers have taken notice. Next year, Audi, Cadillac, Ford and Honda will all join the grid. While the current cost cap keeps spending in check, F1 will never be cheap. You don't need to tour Audi's new facility (as we have on p50) to realise how much the firm has invested.

Interestingly, where once manufacturers used to push motorsport as a proving ground to develop technology, Audi boss Gernot Döllner is transparent about the key appeal being marketing. It gives a performance brand a huge global platform and audience – one that, thanks to Netflix's Drive to Survive and social media, features plenty of young people.

But F1 does showcase technology that has potential for future road cars. The current V6 hybrid regulations will remain but now half the power will come from electric components, while teams will have to develop and use more environmentally friendly synthetic fuels. Such e-fuels aren't the magic bullet some claim – how sustainable they are depends on how they're produced and doing so at volume poses challenges – but they have real potential to make ICE road cars cleaner.

So while manufacturers might be in F1 primarily to sell cars, the sport still plays a role in helping to develop and promote intriguing new road car technology.

James Attwood, associate editor
james.attwood@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online...

autocar.co.uk YouTube TikTok

130 years of Skoda

James Disdale explains how Skoda went from 1900s rally wins to being the butt of the joke to serious player in the car industry.

Car makers' greatest hits

From Alfa Romeo to Volvo – we name the car from every major manufacturer that we regard as being truly iconic.

Peugeot's gorgeous 2+2

Richard Bremner tells the story of the 2009-2015 RCZ – the eye-catching Audi TT rival that made it from concept to showroom.

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CAYENNE ELECTRIC PACKS HYPERCAR-BAITING 1140BHP

Advanced new Porsche SUV arrives in two guises: rapid and ballistic

Porsche has unveiled the long-awaited Cayenne Electric as its most powerful model to date, with 1140bhp on tap.

The German car maker describes its third EV, after the Taycan and Macan Electric, as "the beginning of a new era".

The fourth-generation Cayenne is the first iteration since the SUV's launch in 2002 to be sold without a combustion powertrain.

It sits on the EV-only PPE platform – a decision originally taken as part of a bold plan by Porsche for 80% of its line-up to be electric by 2030.

However, during the Cayenne Electric's development last year, Porsche shelved that plan, citing slower than expected interest in EVs. As a result, alongside the new Cayenne Electric, Porsche will continue to sell the third-generation Cayenne, which will be heavily updated next year – its second facelift in nine years.

This means Porsche's flagship SUV will be offered well into the 2030s with three powertrains – petrol, hybrid and electric.

"With the electrification of the Cayenne, we are reaching a new level of performance that sets standards for the future," said Porsche marketing boss Matthias Becker. "At the same time, we will continue to develop the Cayenne with efficient combustion and hybrid drive systems well into the next decade."

The Cayenne Electric will arrive in the middle of next year, initially in two guises. Prices will start at £83,200, with the top-rung 1140bhp Turbo coming in at £130,900.

POWERTRAIN

For its fourth generation, the Cayenne moves from parent Volkswagen Group's MLB to the same platform that underpins the Macan Electric and Audi Q6 E-tron.

In Turbo form, the dual-motor powertrain puts out 1140bhp and 1106lb ft with launch control activated. That equates to a 0-62mph time of 2.5sec and 0-124mph in 7.4sec. The top speed is 162mph.

Such performance levels put the 2.5-tonne-plus SUV on a par with hypercars such as the Bugatti Veyron and Aston Martin Valhalla.

It surpasses the 1093bhp Taycan Turbo GT as the most powerful Porsche road car yet and for 0-62mph is the joint-third-quickest Porsche to date, alongside the current 911 Turbo S.

Key to the Cayenne Turbo Electric's extreme power output is its rear motor, which features direct oil cooling – an innovation derived from motorsport that ensures "high continuous output and efficiency", says Porsche.

During normal driving, the Turbo model puts out up to 845bhp and an extra 174bhp is available for 10 seconds at a time via a 'push to pass' button on the steering wheel.

The lower-rung version is also equipped with a dual-motor powertrain but

> **"With this car, we are reaching a new level of performance that sets standards for the future"**

OFFICIAL PICTURES

It's 1674mm tall and 4985mm long, with a 3023mm wheelbase

Buyers can pay extra to be able to charge their car wirelessly

Extensive aero work has resulted in a 0.25 drag coefficient

has a much lower output of 402bhp, or 436bhp with launch control enabled. As a result, the 0-62mph sprint time is extended to 4.8sec and top speed reduced to 143mph.

Energy in both variants is supplied by a 113kWh battery, which enables a claimed 398 miles of range in the lower-powered model and 387 miles in the Turbo. That puts the Cayenne EV ahead of rivals such as the BMW iX and Lotus Eletre.

Porsche is expected to offer a single-motor, rear-wheel-drive version of the Cayenne Electric after launch, as it did with the Macan Electric. The PPE platform's 800V electrical system means charging speeds can reach 390kW, providing close to a 200-mile top-up (10-80% charge) in less than 16 minutes. Up to 600kW can be achieved via braking recuperation.

Porsche claims the Cayenne Electric is the first car on the market to be offered with wireless charging. It can top up inductively at up to 11kW.

To do so, owners will need to pay £3000 for a charging pad and £2000 for a water-cooled charge receptor, which weighs 15kg and is bolted behind the protective underbody cladding. All UK-spec Cayenne EVs will be prepared with the necessary wiring and hoses to accept the receptor.

The Turbo model is fitted with Porsche Active Ride, a suspension system that, says Porsche, almost completely compensates for body roll and pitch. It also has a torque-vectoring system and a limited-slip differential at the rear.

Both models get rear-wheel steering.

DESIGN

The new Cayenne's exterior is quite a departure from the third-generation car's and reflects Porsche's attempts to make it as slippery as possible.

The changes are most notable at the front, where in place of the Mk3 Cayenne's signature wide grille is a solid panel and lowered bonnet line.

A raft of active aerodynamic features have also been added to both aid efficiency and improve driving dynamics. These include movable cooling flaps on the nose, air curtains, an adaptive roof spoiler and a lower rear diffuser. The Turbo also has active blades.

As a result, the Cayenne EV has a drag coefficient of 0.25 – 0.1 better than the Eletre. For reference, the Mercedes-Benz CLA EQ, the most efficient EV currently on sale, has a drag coefficient of 0.21.

The Cayenne Electric is also offered with an optional off-road pack, which increases the approach angle and adds extra protection, notably around the battery.

The new SUV is 55mm longer than the Mk3 model, at 4985mm, and is 1980mm wide and 1674mm tall. Its longer, 3023mm wheelbase helps to free up 130mm more rear leg room.

INTERIOR

Front and centre of the cabin is Porsche's new Flow Display. This OLED panel combines the instrument cluster with a 14.25in infotainment touchscreen (split horizontally into two panels) and an optional 14.9in passenger touchscreen for the largest interior unit yet fitted to a Porsche.

Most of the controls are located within the central screen but Porsche has fitted physical buttons and switches for key functions such as the audio and climate control.

A virtual reality head-up display that covers most of the windscreen is available as an option.

The Cayenne Electric comes equipped with what Porsche describes as panel heating. This warms not only the seats but also the armrests and door panels. The rear seats are electronically adjustable.

Rear luggage capacity is rated at 781 litres – almost 200 litres more than in the iX and over 90 litres more than in the Eletre. With the seats down, cargo space increases to 1588 litres. In addition, there's 90 litres of storage under the bonnet.

WILL RIMELL

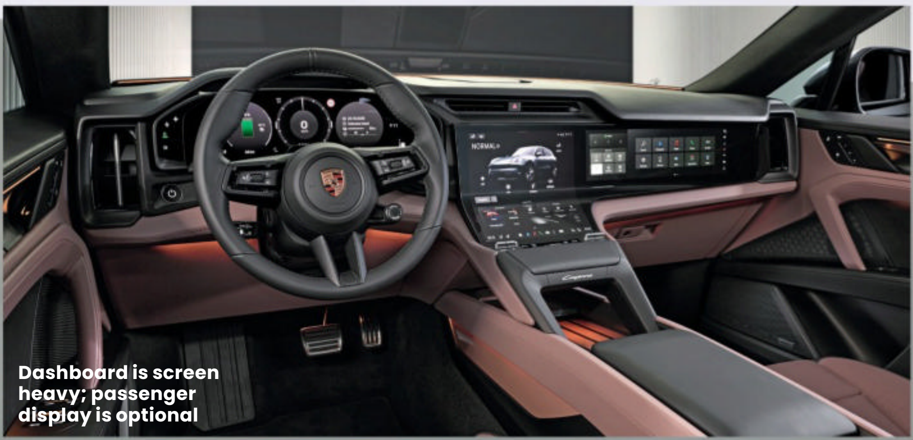
IT'S MORE POWERFUL THAN WHAT?

McLaren Speedtail
1036bhp

Ferrari 849 Testarossa
1036bhp

Mercedes-AMG One
1049bhp

Lamborghini Fenomeno
1065bhp


Dashboard is screen heavy; passenger display is optional

OFFICIAL PICTURES

641BHP GENESIS GV60 MAGMA GUNS FOR MACAN

SUV paves way for more models from new performance sub-brand

The new Genesis GV60 Magma will arrive next year as a luxury rival to the Porsche Macan Electric and is the first model from the Korean firm's new performance sub-brand.

Described as a "luxury GT with the agility of a track car", the new flagship version of the electric SUV is set to reach the UK around the middle of next year.

It will be the first in a full line-up of Magma variants that will be used to help reposition Genesis with a greater focus on performance.

The brand claims Magma models will serve as Genesis "superheroes", maintaining the values of the standard versions but with "superpowered enhancements" that will enable them to offer a dual personality. Luc Donckerwolke, Genesis's chief creative officer, said: "Magma is not a hardcore sub-brand. It is the best of the best of Genesis."

Magma is essentially Genesis's equivalent to Hyundai's N brand and the GV60 Magma uses much of the technology developed for the Ioniq 5 N and Ioniq 6 N.

The significant performance-based enhancements to the GV60 Magma are clearly visible in the exterior styling, including a large rear wing. While primarily enhancing airflow, the three holes in the front bumper will be a signature feature of Magma models.

The GV60 Magma retains the E-GMP platform of the standard model. As with the Ioniq 5 N, it offers all-wheel drive from a pair of electric motors with a combined maximum output of 641bhp and 583lb ft of torque.

Using launch control, the GV60 Magma can accelerate from 0-62mph in 3.4sec. Three drive modes will be offered: Sprint, GT and a customisable My setting.

There's also a Drift mode and, as with its Hyundai relations, a virtual gearshift system that simulates a sequential gearbox in a combustion sports car.

> **"Magma is not a hardcore sub-brand. It's the best of the best of Genesis"**

Rear wing signals performance intent; car will hit UK in 2026

WILL MAGMA SUPERCHARGE GENESIS'S IMAGE?

JAMES ATTWOOD

Since it launched in 2021, Genesis has sold around 5000 cars in the UK. Not exactly a success story, but perhaps not a surprise: breaking into this country's premium market is difficult. Remember Infiniti?

There has been more success globally and selling 1.3 million cars in a decade is a useful contributor to parent Hyundai group's global volume. But there's clearly room to grow – and Genesis has audacious plans to do so, with a new focus on performance.

It won't be easy. The Magma sub-brand will be competing with the likes of BMW M, Mercedes-AMG and Audi Sport. But the fact that Magma will draw on shared engineering with Hyundai's N division suggests the GV60 Magma can deliver performance thrills.

And the credentials for success are there. Sibling brands Hyundai and Kia in recent years have shown what can be achieved with ambition and investment. And what bolder statement of ambition than a mid-engined sports car?

Power comes from an 84kWh battery while an 800V electric architecture enables fast charging at speeds of up to 240kW.

Genesis hasn't disclosed an official range yet but it cites an efficiency figure of 2.67mpkWh. For reference, the Ioniq 5 N has an official range of 278 miles.

As with the N cars, the GV60 Magma hasn't just been developed with a focus on increasing power. Extensive work has also been done to the chassis set-up and systems such as the e-LSD. It weighs 2240kg.

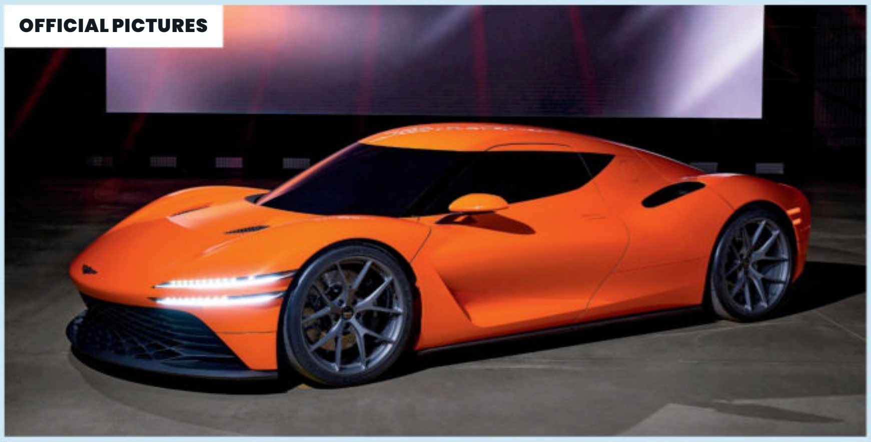
Genesis engineers have adjusted the suspension by altering the geometry and recalibrating the roll centre. There are also electric suspension and end-of-travel control systems, intended to balance the need for stability in corners and ride comfort.

The suspension has been equipped with new fluid-filled 'Hydro G' bushings up front and dual-layer bushings in the rear crossmember to minimise vibrations.

There are also monoblock calipers and 400mm disc brakes up front, which have been tuned for the 21in wheels. The Magma sits on custom Pirelli tyres that, at 275mm, are the widest yet offered on a GV60.

The artificial sound system includes "Magma-exclusive sounds", while the digital interface has a bespoke Magma mode that offers a three-circle instrument cluster showing motor and battery temps, speed and g-force.

JAMES ATTWOOD



OFFICIAL PICTURES

GENESIS REVEALS VISION FOR FERRARI RIVAL, GT3 RACER

GENESIS HAS REVEALED a new mid-engined Magma GT Concept that previews a future road-going "pure sports car" and GT3 racer set to be launched some time after 2027.

Described as the "clearest expression yet" of the Korean brand's commitment to performance, the new concept was unveiled at the official launch of the Magma sub-brand and will spawn a future halo model that will pitch Genesis into competition with the likes of McLaren and Ferrari.

Genesis creative chief Luc Donckerwolke said the model "represents the pinnacle of our performance vision and stands as a symbol of our commitment to true motorsport capability". He added that the car is "not simply a faster Genesis" but "the most complete expression of Genesis performance to date".

The concept is powered by a V8 engine, but no decision has been made on what powertrain the production version will use.

Genesis will expand into motorsport this year, running a pair of hypercars in the World Endurance Championship. That programme will be extended to the US-based IMSA Championship in 2027 with its LMDh car – and Genesis indicated it will expand its motorsport commitment to a GT3 programme some time after that, hinting at an arrival around the end of the decade.

The launch of a mid-engined sports car is a key part of ambitious plans to grow Genesis's global sales by 55% in the next five years, from 225,000 at present to 350,000 by 2030.

José Muñoz, president of Hyundai and Genesis, said the brand has a "very clear strategy: we want to introduce new advanced technologies and we want to enter into new growth markets. It's a very simple plan, but very powerful."

In terms of new technology, Genesis continues to push electric propulsion, but its 'brand ambition' now includes hybrids and range-extended electric vehicles, which are likely to be key to continued growth in the US market.

Muñoz said there will be a continued focus on SUVs and the growth of its 'one of one' bespoke programme, while within the next 10 years every Genesis model will be offered with a Magma variant.

Concept previews a mid-engined car due to arrive after 2027

Magma mode brings a three-dial set-up to the driver display

HYPERSQUARE IS ‘FUTURE OF DRIVING PLEASURE’

Can Peugeot’s new drive-by-wire steering live up to that claim? We try it

The Monaco Grand Prix circuit is a heck of a place to choose for your first drive of an unfamiliar prototype that introduces a by-wire steering system and a rectangular steering ‘wheel’.

Peugeot’s brand-new Hypersquare steering system was previewed by the radical new Polygon concept, which was revealed earlier this month.

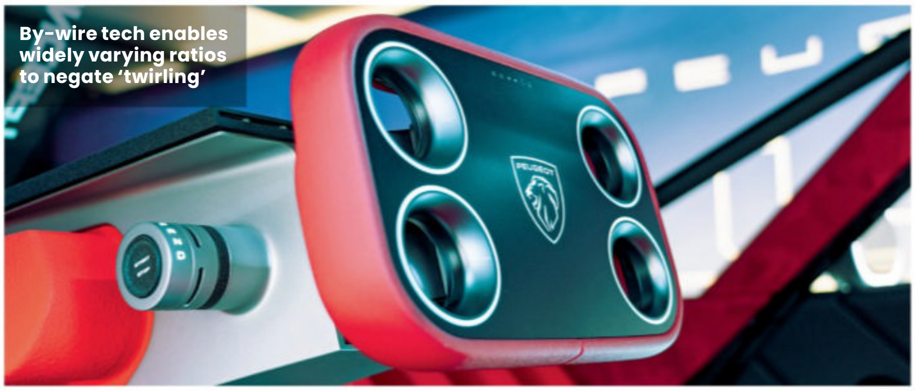
The system, likely to be offered as an option on most models of the forthcoming new 208 in 2027, is the next step beyond the i-Cockpit design that the firm introduced 13 years ago. That consisted of a then rare small-diameter steering wheel, set low so the instruments were viewed over the wheel rather than through it.

Company bosses claim big success for the i-Cockpit, having sold 13 million cars equipped with it since it first appeared in the 208. They also point to the fact that the 308, another popular i-Cockpit car, currently attracts 73% repeat business.

Driving with Hypersquare is a fascinating experience, conventional and revolutionary by turns. Your fingers curl comfortably around an odd-looking, fairly thick, unusually shaped ‘wheel’ with four fist-sized holes, each containing normal switchgear. The theory is that you can work nearly all of the car’s major functions without needing to remove your hands from the controls, Formula 1-style.

In essence, the steering offers a widely varying ratio that is a fairly typical 16:1 at speeds above 50mph but quickens as much as five times at low speeds to add remarkable agility when manoeuvring. The effort required is a little heavier than in the current i-Cockpit to make the business of adding lock a bit more deliberate.

My prototype drive proved within a mile or two that most drivers will acclimatise pretty quickly to Hypersquare’s USP of offering much more turning



By-wire tech enables widely varying ratios to negate ‘twirling’

WHAT IS STEER BY WIRE?

This new technology is coming of age quickly. It is already fitted to the Lexus RZ and is set to feature in the new Mercedes S-Class EV and incoming Nio ET9.

So what is it? In a nutshell, it means that the connection between driver and wheels, which is traditionally mechanical, is now… not. Instead, the link is electrical, with driver's inputs sent to a steering rack unit.

There are many benefits to this. The key one is that engineers can programme the ratio, meaning less input can be asked for at lower speed, aiding agility.

They can also use software to tune it to create attributes that best represent a particular brand without the need for extra hardware. It means fewer parts and shorter development time too, resulting in less cost to the car maker.

The issues come mainly in a lack of steering torque or road feel, so feedback is all artificial, something drivers will need to get used to and is likely to change between marques.

Hypersquare made its debut on the Polygon concept

response. Once you've acclimatised, all the wheel winding of a normal car feels a bit… silly.

After a few miles in our Hypersquare-equipped 2008 prototype, I was left with the feeling of much enhanced sportiness. Peugeot tech expert Arthur Megy, who has worked on this for seven years, reckons it's "the future of driving pleasure".

It's excellent for reverse parking too. You can steer the car into a tight space with no more than a quarter turn of lock in each direction.

Two more things stand out. First, it takes a while to get used to the complete absence of road vibration, something you barely notice until it's not there. Peugeot insists the system still has sufficient "road feel", but we will need to drive more to prove it completely.

Second is the change in the system's ratio from crawl to above 50mph. The rate of change is still being tuned, say Peugeot engineers, but to me it felt reasonably natural, even if others demurred.

At the end of a 20-minute drive, I felt I had settled into the car quite well and was already putting a high value on the low-speed agility.

Peugeot is still deciding which new models will use Hypersquare, although CEO Alain Favey would like to make it an option across the range. The pure-electric models are obvious candidates, but the new 208 will be a multi-power model and Megy says there's no reason why Hypersquare couldn't be applied to them all.

Bosses see such obvious advantages from Hypersquare that they're convinced other Stellantis group brands – and rival manufacturers – will soon want to adopt it. The important thing, they believe, is to keep progressing so that the brand is always at the forefront. Those who follow will be paying Peugeot a big compliment.

STEVE CROPLEY

FOCUS REACHES END OF THE LINE

PRODUCTION OF THE Ford Focus has ended after 27 years and 12 million sales.

Ford announced the decision in 2022 as it sought to accelerate the transition of its European line-up to electric models. As a result, the hatchback's place has effectively been taken by the Explorer and the Capri, electric crossovers based on the Volkswagen Group's MEB architecture.

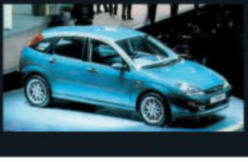
Although the Focus has been discontinued, Autocar recently reported that Ford is looking to fill the gap it has left with a new mid-sized crossover, due in 2027.

The Focus's end also means that the Focus plant in Saarlouis, Germany, no longer builds any cars.

Ford has yet to confirm a buyer, leaving the factory's future in doubt.

THE FOCUS SCOOP WE NEVER SPOTTED

Before Ford launched its Escort replacement in 1998, its name was a closely guarded secret. "Even Ford engineers who had been in the Focus project for years were unaware of its final name," wrote Steve Cropley back then. Yet the scoop was there to be had: Ford vice-president (soon to be CEO) Jac Nasser sat next to Cropley at dinner before the Geneva unveiling and peppered the chat with the word 'focus'. "Did you get it?" Nasser asked Cropley as the covers were pulled off. Cropley hadn't: "The significance of the word had missed me by yards."



BO3X-FRESH LEAPMOTOR

Stellantis-backed Leapmotor has unveiled a new electric crossover that will battle it out with the Ford Puma Gen-E. Touted to arrive in the UK late next year, the B03X (A10 in China) is expected to offer around 270 miles of range. The similar-sized Puma delivers 250 miles. The B03X is likely to feature the same 67.1kWh battery as the larger Leapmotor B10 SUV.

GOLF TO BECOME PLUG-FREE FULL HYBRID NEXT YEAR

Prius-style system will join the line-up alongside PHEV and mild hybrid

The Volkswagen Golf will gain new hybrid powertrains by the end of 2026, company officials have confirmed to Autocar.

The new petrol-electric unit will initially make its debut in the second-generation T-Roc and is aimed at providing plug-in-free electric driving capability similar to that offered by the Toyota Prius.

Volkswagen has already confirmed it will come in two power levels: 136bhp and 170bhp. Autocar has been told the Golf will receive the more powerful version in various global export markets, including the US, but it remains to be seen which version will be offered in Golf models sold in the UK.

Volkswagen's latest hybrid powertrain represents a significant departure from its previous electrification efforts. It combines a turbocharged 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine with an electric motor and a seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox.

A high-voltage lithium ion battery of as yet unspecified capacity is situated underneath the rear seats to free up boot space and provide optimised weight distribution.

The system operates as a series-parallel hybrid, which allows it to run the petrol engine and electric motor independently of each other or in combination to drive the front wheels.

In its most powerful form, the petrol engine and the electric motor deliver 170bhp and up to 226lb ft of torque.

At urban driving speeds, Volkswagen's new hybrid system is programmed to favour the electric motor, with the petrol engine operating as a generator to

> **"It offers better efficiency than our mild hybrid"**

RAKISH NEW BMW iX4 TO EXCEED 500-MILE RANGE

THE NEXT BMW X4 is in the works as a coupé-roofed version of the new iX3 EV and is set to offer a range of more than 500 miles.

Prototypes of the new SUV have been spotted testing for the first time ahead of its unveiling, which is expected to happen early next year.

It will be the first X4 to offer an electric powertrain, the model having offered only petrol and diesel options since it was launched in 2014.

Being based on the iX3, it shares many of its visual cues with that car, although it gains a more steeply raked roofline.

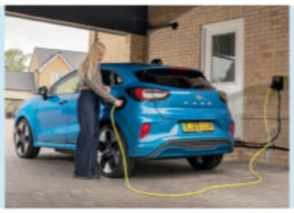
That body shape could make the iX4 one of the longest-range EVs sold in the UK, given the iX3 offers a benchmark 500 miles

ECG DROPS LEAF TO £32K

The British-built Nissan Leaf has secured the UK government's maximum £3750 Electric Car Grant. Due early next year, the Volvo EX30 rival will be priced from £32,249, including the ECG.

MORE RANGE FOR PUMA EV

Ford has increased the range of the Puma Gen-E with an update. The SUV's 43kWh battery has been made more efficient, which means it can now deliver more than 250 miles, up from the previous 233 miles.



top up the energy reserves of the battery.

VW officials told Autocar that market studies identified strong demand among potential Golf customers for electrification but without the requirement for plugging in to charge the battery.

The company said: "We see that Volkswagen customers want the fuel efficiency and smooth operation of electric drive but aren't ready for the charging infrastructure commitment.

"Our new hybrid system offers electric driving, better fuel efficiency than our mild hybrid, while maintaining the refuelling convenience of conventional petrol models."

Production of the Golf with the series-parallel hybrid drivetrain is scheduled to begin during the second half of 2026. The new system has been conceived to complement rather than replace existing 48V mild-hybrid and plug-in hybrid drivetrains.

GREG KABLE

VW REVIEW THROWS DOUBT ON GOLF PRODUCTION MOVE

VOLKSWAGEN MAY HALT its plan to move Golf production to Mexico, Autocar has learned.

The news comes as the company reviews key elements of its global production strategy, announced last year.

The rethink has been prompted by delays in the development of its Scalable Systems Platform (SSP) for EVs, rising financial pressure and employee unrest.

A decision to transfer production of the ICE Golf from Wolfsburg, Germany, to Puebla, Mexico, in 2027 was announced in December last year as part of a job security deal made with Volkswagen's works council.

Simultaneously, Volkswagen confirmed its Wolfsburg manufacturing headquarters was to gain two EVs – the upcoming facelifted Volkswagen ID 3 and its Cupra Born sibling – from the Zwickau factory, ensuring production capacity at the historic plant remained utilised.

However, Volkswagen's supervisory board has now postponed its multi-year investment package, with internal forecasts suggesting it is facing an €11 billion (£9.7bn) funding gap for 2026 alone.

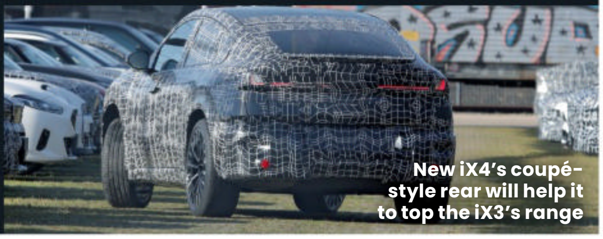
According to Volkswagen sources, this has thrown numerous new model development projects and previous production planning into doubt, including the Golf's move to Mexico.

"The investment is the heart of our long-term strategy," a source familiar with the matter told Autocar. "When it is postponed, projects are called into question, including those that have already been decided upon."

between charges. Power is likely to match that of its SUV sibling, which offers up to 464bhp from a dual-motor set-up.

Inside, it will adopt BMW's new 17.9in infotainment touchscreen.

It is expected to arrive in late 2026. Production of the current X4, which went on sale seven years ago, is earmarked to end in the coming weeks.



New iX4's coupé-style rear will help it to top the iX3's range

LAND CRUISER TO BE AN £81K HYBRID

TOYOTA HAS PRICED the Land Cruiser Hybrid 48V from £80,740 and confirmed deliveries will start in March. The hybrid is the only version of the 4x4 now on sale and, due to the configuration of the new powertrain, it can be had with five seats only. It combines a 2.8-litre four-cylinder diesel with an electric motor-generator and a 48V battery.

NEW FREELANDER DUE SOON

The first new Freelander model in over a decade will be revealed "in the coming months", said JLR. The tech-led EV has been created in a tie-up with Chery. It will initially be sold exclusively in China.

AUTOCAR
IMAGE

FIREFLY TO LAND IN THE UK

Firefly, the EV brand from China's Nio, will launch in the UK next year, said its president, Daniel Jin. Its only model is a 141bhp eponymous Renault 5 rival, which is already on sale in Norway from £21k.

UK FIRM MAKES DRIVERLESS TECH ADVANCES USING AI

Wayve's cutting-edge Fords are driving hands-free in busy London traffic

We've been cruising hands-free through north London traffic for about 40 minutes but our Ford Mustang Mach-E now faces a tough test: an unprotected right turn into a busy street.

A parked black cab blocks the view on the left while the broad spectrum of London traffic dashes on by, not giving an inch. But the Ford behaves remarkably human-like, creeping out until it spots a gap and then nipping into the flow without drama.

The demonstration makes a powerful case for what UK firm Wayve calls AV 2.0, where artificial intelligence (AI) makes decisions rather than the car following a pre-programmed set of rules.

AV 1.0 by this definition is Google's Waymo, the pioneering autonomous service operating in five US cities with a claimed 10 million rides under its belt.

Waymo's 2000-strong Jaguar I-Pace fleet is instantly recognisable, but their huge bank of sensors is also the hurdle to wider acceptance. They cost an estimated $30,000 (£22,875) to convert.

Wayve still has a sensor rig on its Fords but claims it has shrunk that hardware bill to between $1000 and $2000 (£760-£1520).

NO GEOFENCING REQUIRED

"We're seeing a paradigm shift here from AV 1.0 to AV 2.0," Alex Kendall, co-founder and CEO of Wayve, told Autocar.

However, Wayve's next-level approach to hands-free driving is about far more than stripping cost from a sensor set.

"A lot of the systems driving in Shanghai or San Francisco do so with a very complex set of rules that takes an army of engineers to hand-code and typically doesn't deal with the complexity of an environment," said Kendall.

Wayve guides cars using 'end-to-end' AI, which makes decisions on the fly based on learned intelligence only. This 'generalisation' is better at dealing with the unfamiliar, claims Wayve.

"You're never going to see everything in your training data," said Kendall, "so it's all about being able to learn general concepts and be able to apply those concepts to new things."

Whereas Waymo cars are carefully geofenced to operate in a specific area mapped in high definition, Wayve claims to be able to operate from the get-go in an unfamiliar city.

"We can go to any traffic light in the UK, Europe, Asia or North America and the car can drive through it," said Kendall. Wayve recently claimed that its AI learned to adapt to Japan's roads "within months".

WILL LAWS KILL OFF DRIVERLESS TECH?

The problem, however, will come with the law makers.

"Regulators in Europe will not accept end-to-end AI," Christian Senger, CEO of Volkswagen Autonomous Mobility, told Autocar in September. "You can't launch a fully end-to-end AI service where you can't prove how this system really works."

VW is advancing its own robotaxi programme, named Moia. Currently, this operates as a trial scheme in Germany, but the programme will expand to the US in 2026, where 10,000 ID Buzz vans, equipped with Mobileye's AI-led and rules-based system, will be operated by Uber.

Next year, Senger hopes to reach the point when it can tell regulators: "We're better than a human." He is banking on Moia winning over law makers with not just a more transparent decision-making system but also a complete service.

"Everybody has a fragment of a product," said Senger of the likes of Wayve, Rimac-backed Verne and other autonomous driving companies. "Imagine you were in charge of a city's mobility administration. How to start [licensing robotaxi companies]? Who is liable? What kind of education would my staff need? What kind of facilities do I need? Moia would offer a turnkey solution."

He cites examples such as exiting a parking garage when there's no human hand to take a ticket or knowing where to legally drop off a customer.

DRIVERLESS CARS POISED FOR BIG UK TRIAL

Wayve will next year take part in what will be the biggest test of driverless cars in the UK to date.

A large mass of autonomous taxis will take to London's roads as part of a government-backed pilot scheme that aims to accelerate the tech's arrival.

Wayve has partnered Uber for the trial. US firm Waymo will also participate.

Although personal driverless cars won't be legal on UK roads under current legislation until the second half of 2027, a new government framework allows Uber and Waymo to run the technology before that date. This legislation has already been used by Wayve and Nissan in testing autonomous technology.

Tesla is building a fleet of Model Y robotaxis; Cybercab due 2027

Cards & Gifts

Waymo's I-Paces use expensive sensors and are geofenced

However, Wayve isn't concerned with operating robotaxis. It just wants to sell its AI Driver software to anyone willing to integrate it into a vehicle.

So far, Nissan is the first to announce it will incorporate it into a Japanese-built production car starting in 2026 – though that integration will be used to advance its hands-off, eyes-on (level two-plus) semi-autonomous cruise control, a similar system to Ford's BlueCruise.

NEXT STOP: ROBOTAXIS

For Wayve, the leap from level two-plus to level four (fully driverless in a specific area) isn't so big. My London demo was level two-plus, with a safety driver present. However, since the driver didn't intervene once during the near hour-long trip, a robotaxi application is easily conceivable.

Other than VW and Tesla, car makers have been wary of pouring money into a technology that so far has proven to be expensive, is dependent on regulators and isn't scalable.

However, there are signs that cautious optimism is returning. All eyes are on Tesla and whether its promise of a 1500-strong robotaxi fleet materialises by the end of the year.

"Their success would be extremely valuable for us to monitor, because that will tell us what we can do and what we should not do either," Simone Fabris, Wayve's head of product and delivery, told Autocar.

The promise of robotaxis has always been tantalisingly out of reach. However, if regulators can be persuaded that AI-based systems offer a leap forward in safety, the jump from techno dream to reality in Europe could be close at hand.

NICK GIBBS

Wayve's Mach-E relies on AI and more affordable sensors

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE

Bosch is using a hydrogen truck at its Nuremberg plant

HYDROGEN POWER JUST KEEPS ON TRUCKING ON

WE OFTEN HEAR about technology crossing over from motorsport. But if hydrogen fuel cells ever do make it to mainstream cars, it's looking as though trucks, not racing, will play a major part in establishing the technology first.

Bosch sees hydrogen as a major contributor to decarbonisation in the future and has recently put an articulated lorry powered by its fuel cell power module (FCPM) into service at its plant in Nuremberg, Germany. It has good reason to feel positive about a future hydrogen economy. Bosch expects a global hydrogen energy capacity of 100-170GW and sales revenue for the company running into billions by 2030.

Fuel cells consuming hydrogen and electrolysers making it have more than a little in common because one is effectively a reverse of the other. Fuel cells consume hydrogen and oxygen to make electricity, with heat and water as by-products, while electrolysers consume electricity to 'split' water by electrolysis and make hydrogen, with oxygen as a by-product.

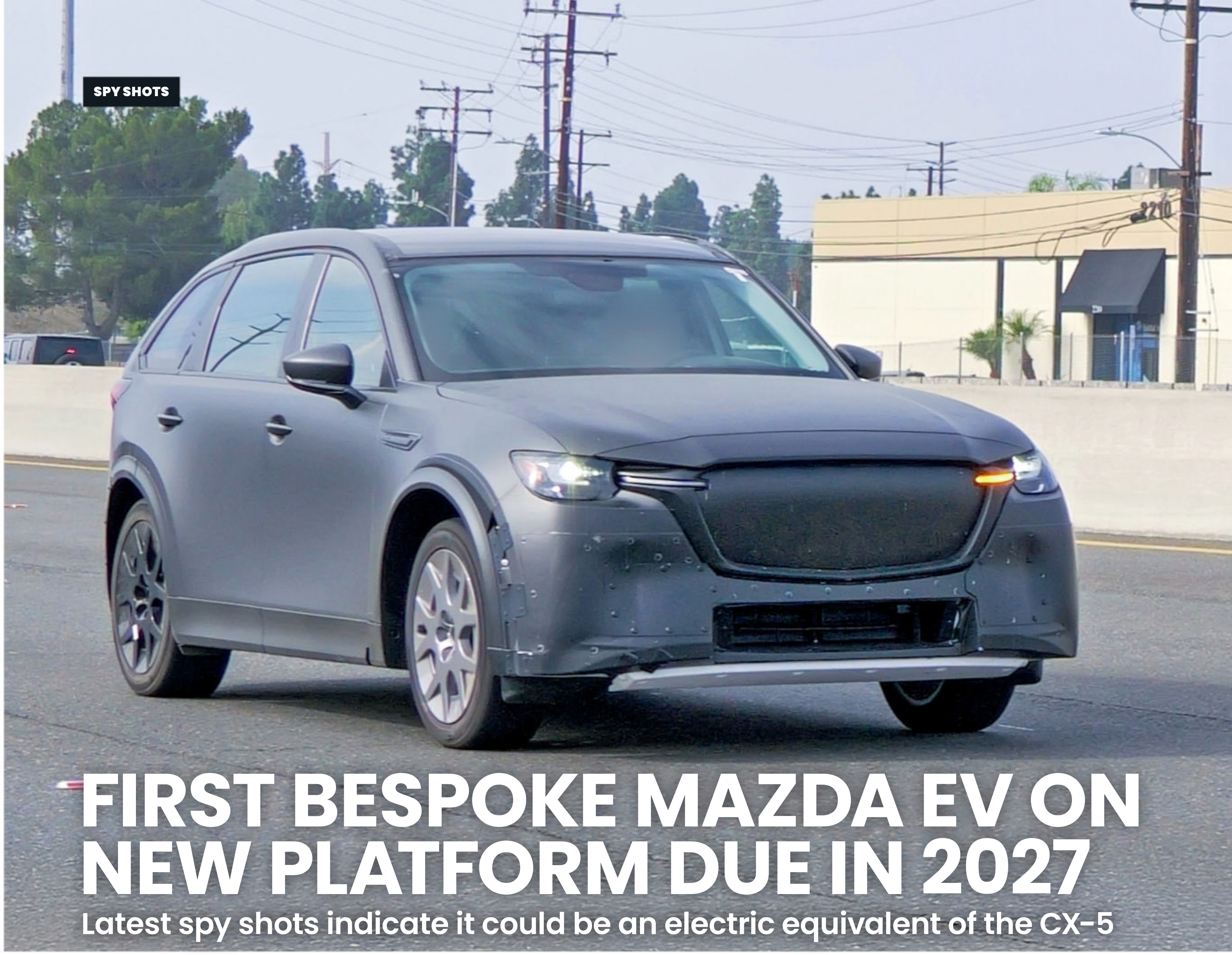
It's not surprising, then, that Bosch is focusing on the development of both in conjunction with specialist partners. The 40-tonne Iveco truck is intended to set an example to support Bavaria's Hydrogen Strategy 2.0, but it's not alone and there are several thousand trucks worldwide that are also powered by Bosch fuel cell systems. Large-scale production of the FCPM started in 2023 in Stuttgart-Feuerbach.

The truck is expected to cover just under 7500 miles a year and has a range of around 500 miles fuelled by 70kg of hydrogen gas stored in five tanks at a pressure of 700 bar. The fuel cell system produces a total of 200kW but there are two high-voltage battery packs storing electricity, giving a total power output of 400kW. Refuelling times are said to be similar to that of refuelling a diesel truck.

Earlier this year, Bosch showed its Hybrion PEM (proton exchange membrane) electrolysis stacks, which form the heart of a 2.5MW system supplied by electrolyser specialist Fest. A proton exchange membrane is a fine polymer membrane a few microns thick that, in an electrolyser, allows hydrogen protons from water to pass through it to form hydrogen gas.

Elsewhere in Germany, BMW is planning a hydrogen pipeline link, aiming to make its Leipzig plant the first in the world to receive hydrogen in this way. A 1.2-mile pipeline will connect the plant to a hydrogen network and supplies are due to start in 2027.

Hydrogen is seen as a sustainable way to produce power in car manufacturing facilities and BMW plans to use the plentiful supply of piped hydrogen for some of its most energy-intensive processes, such as curing ovens in paint shops. It already operates a fleet of 230 logistics vehicles, which are refuelled at nine hydrogen stations within the plant. The pipeline will connect the plant to Germany's Core Hydrogen Network, which will consist of more than 5600 miles of hydrogen pipeline in the country by 2032.



SPY SHOTS

FIRST BESPOKE MAZDA EV ON NEW PLATFORM DUE IN 2027

Latest spy shots indicate it could be an electric equivalent of the CX-5

Mazda has begun testing prototypes of its first bespoke EV, tipped to be a sibling to its best-selling CX-5, ahead of a planned launch in 2027.

The Japanese firm is one of the largest independent global car makers that has not yet used a bespoke EV architecture for a production car.

Its first EV, the MX-30 crossover, was based on the underpinnings of the combustion-engined CX-30 and its new 6e saloon and EZ-60 SUV are based on platforms supplied by Chinese joint-venture partner Changan.

But as part of a $10 billion (£7.6bn) push to electrify its line-up over the coming years, Mazda is now well under way with the development of its own platform for EVs, having previously announced plans to launch a bespoke EV in 2027.

Now, a prototype using the platform has been spotted for the first time by Autocar photographers.

At first glance the test mules could be mistaken for a CX-90, but the propositions are significantly shorter – which can be clearly seen by the distance between the front door's leading cut-line to the front wheel arch, revealing changes underneath.

It is also trimmer than the CX-90, as evidenced by the wheels being dwarfed by the larger arches.

Mules have been seen testing near Mazda's R&D centre in California. Some US reports suggest this could be a model specific to that market, but this is unlikely given the country's slow EV adoption rate.

“Our EV products will be real Mazda products”

Don't be fooled by the CX-90-style looks: it's smaller than that

Speaking about the platform, Mazda chief technical officer Ryuichi Umeshita told Autocar last month that the firm is working towards an all-electric future and is committed to using bespoke EV architectures for its next generation of electric models.

He said: “We've established our own electrification development team, which we call ‘E-Mazda’, and that team has been doing a great job.

“I've driven a prototype car already, which I would say is a real ‘jinba ittai’ car – our key concept of wellness between car and driver. It has very good driving dynamics. So we're confident that our EV products will be real Mazda products.”

Umeshita acknowledged that Mazda is behind rivals in launching an EV platform but said the development of the MX-30 means “we

Wheelbase length suggests the test EV is a five-seater

do have a lot of good engineers, experienced engineers already, so I don't think that we are behind the market because of that".

He stopped short of giving any clues about which types of models Mazda is working on and said a decision hasn't yet been made on whether its first bespoke EV needs to be a high- or low-volume proposition.

"It depends on the market and the regulations," he said. "If the regulation requires [a higher EV mix], it must be a volume car. If the regulation is eased, then we can ease the volume restraints."

WILL RIMELL

Position of the wheels in the arches shows this is an R&D mule

MITSUBISHI CONFIRMS RETURN TO UK NEXT YEAR

MITSUBISHI WILL RETURN to the UK next year, five years after quitting the market.

Its cars will be imported by International Motors, which also oversees UK sales of GWM, Isuzu, Subaru and Xpeng.

Customer deliveries will begin in summer 2026, although Mitsubishi has yet to confirm which models it will send to the UK. It accompanied the news with this image of a covered SUV.

Frank Krol, president and CEO of Mitsubishi Europe, said: "Our upcoming models represent the very best of Mitsubishi Motors' core technologies in performance, four-wheel drive and much more."

Likely candidates include the Eclipse Cross, effectively a restyled Renault Scenic EV, and the Outlander plug-in hybrid.

Head of Mitsubishi UK Sharon Townsend said "we've continued to see enthusiasm for the brand" since its exit from the UK four years ago, "which has strongly influenced this decision". Krol concurred that the UK is "a market where our brand continues to have a deep emotional connection with loyal customers".

New dealerships will be established to complement the existing UK network of 100 Mitsubishi aftersales garages.

OFFICIAL PICTURE

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

JLR's all-new electric line-up has yet to become reality

IN JUNE 2021, Thierry Bolloré gave his only sit-down interview with Autocar in the middle of a two-year stint as JLR's CEO. Bolloré started the modern evolution at JLR and outlined his desire for the firm to focus less on the scale it craved in the 2010s and more on becoming a financially sound business built on creating more profitable models, the star among them a reborn Jaguar.

Four years on, where are those models? Derivatives aside, the last all-new model JLR revealed that is currently on sale is the Range Rover Sport, shown in May 2022. JLR has had more challenges than most, including the recent cyber attack, but to go more than three years without launching a new car... What's happening?

Bolloré was replaced in late 2022 by Adrian Mardell, who left the firm last week having launched no new models. In 2023, JLR's 'House of Brands' was announced, creating separate entities out of Range Rover, Discovery and Defender to join Jaguar, but none of these stand-alone brands has had an all-new car since its creation.

Bolloré was candid about what he found when he joined JLR. He said improving reliability was the "first pillar" of his Reimagine transformation plan for the firm, labelling what he'd inherited as "unacceptable".

He spoke with surprise of finding a company working in silos and on unconnected systems, and one that needed more technology and digital design tools to ensure components were designed to be of a better standard and were better integrated at the start of the development process.

This would manifest itself with faster development times and reduced warranty claims, said Bolloré, who believed JLR was too slow to get cars to market and even then they weren't of sufficient quality.

This is a mantra Mardell took forward – doubled down on, even. Asked at JLR's most recent financial results briefing why the firm was so slow at product development and its cars kept being delayed, he pointed to the quality customer statutory requirement he introduced when joining the board that meant cars would be launched only once ready.

"We need to be customer ready [before we launch], and if that takes a few months longer, then that is our policy," said Mardell.

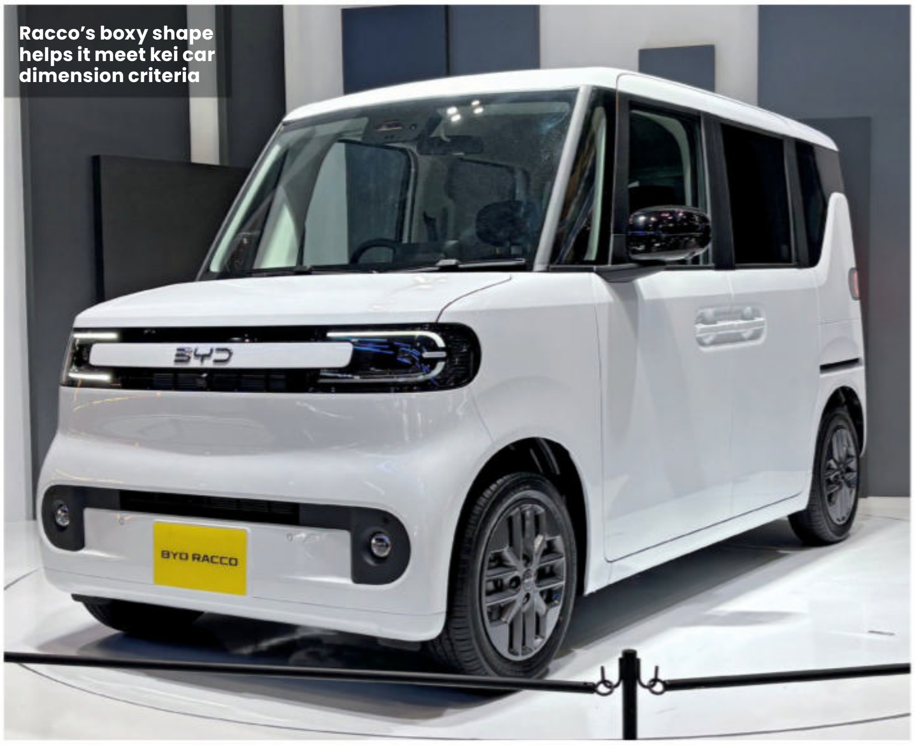
Of the new JLR cars we know about, the Range Rover EV no longer has a set launch date and the new Jaguar is still a year away. A new family of smaller electric models led by a second-generation Velar is also scheduled for next year. Who knows when they really will be launched? It's been a long time since JLR stuck to a launch date.

It's a shame that Mardell, an honest if reluctant talker but clearly an astute financial leader and a man for a crisis, will not get to do what car company bosses are supposed to do: launch cars. His replacement, PB Balaji, needs to urgently break the inertia.

> **"Who knows when they'll arrive? It's a while since JLR stuck to a launch date"**

BYD EYES EU FOR RACCO ROLLOUT

Kei class-compliant EV could come to Europe if E-car proposal takes off


Racco's boxy shape helps it meet kei car dimension criteria

Honda is bringing its new Super-N kei car to the UK

BYD could bring its new Racco kei car to Europe if the EU's mooted E-car category for small cars increases the viability of such models.

The Racco was revealed at the Tokyo motor show last month as a landmark non-Japanese entry into a segment that represents almost a third of car sales in the country and which is served almost exclusively by domestic manufacturers.

The Racco has been designed and engineered to meet the kei class regulations of Japan, where it's initially set to be sold exclusively. It measures 3.4m long, 1.475m wide and 1.8m tall and has boxy, straight-edged styling similar to its Japanese kei class rivals.

It has a 20kWh battery that is said to be good for 112 miles of range and charging at up to 100kW and which powers a front axle-mounted single motor of undisclosed strength.

While the Racco is a key statement of intent for the brand in Japan, company vice-president Stella Li has suggested to Autocar that it could ultimately play an important role globally as a new entry model.

"In Japan we are already launching a kei car," she said. "We will be very interested to follow the EU regulation. If there's some space, we can bring that car here."

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has said she is working to establish the proposed EU E-car category as part of a drive to usher in a new generation of "small, affordable cars".

The move comes in response to various manufacturers' assertions that the continual onslaught of new regulations and mandatory technologies have made small cars too expensive to produce and sell in the EU, and this has priced a significant proportion of the European population out of the market for new cars.

Full details of the E-car class (the 'E' stands for 'European', 'environmental' and 'economical') remain to be outlined, but the framework is widely viewed as a key step towards reintroducing small, cheap cars to the region, and it has been compared to Japan's kei car class.

Honda has already confirmed plans to launch the Super-N, an adapted version of its N-One electric kei car, in the UK next year.

However, Li added that a European launch of the Racco was not an area of immediate focus for BYD, which is investing heavily in expanding its range of hybrids in all segments in the face of faltering demand for EVs in Europe.

FELIX PAGE

DENZA FLAGSHIP CONFIRMED FOR GOODWOOD UNVEILING

DENZA WILL REVEAL a new flagship sports coupé at the Goodwood Festival of Speed next summer, before launching it in the UK and Europe in 2027.

Denza, Chinese giant BYD's answer to BMW and Mercedes, will come to the UK next year with the Z9 GT shooting brake, D9 luxury MPV and B5 SUV before adding the 'Z' supercar (pictured) to the range.

The brand revealed a concept previewing the Z at the Shanghai show. Denza said the performance-focused two-door EV has steer-by-wire technology, magnetorheological suspension and a driver-focused but tech-heavy cockpit.

It's possible the Z could take the Z9 GT's tri-motor powertrain and ramp up output beyond its 952bhp.

Asked if the Z could act as a brand-building halo model for Denza in Europe, BYD executive vice-president Stella Li said "we'd like to invite you to Goodwood…", before confirming the car would be displayed there before heading to showrooms.

Li added that the name for the production version of the Z concept remains "confidential" and it could change. When it arrives, the halo model will play a key role in cementing Denza's premium and performance credentials in Europe.

SPY SHOT

BYD IN SCREEN U-TURN

BYD will stop offering its cars with a rotating touchscreen. The tech was a headline feature of its cars during its early European rollout, but company vice-president Stella Li said that as the brand ramps up the use of third-party apps and platforms, "a rotating screen will limit their apps' smoothness". She added that while customers "love" the rotating screen, their "use is small".

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

MONDAY

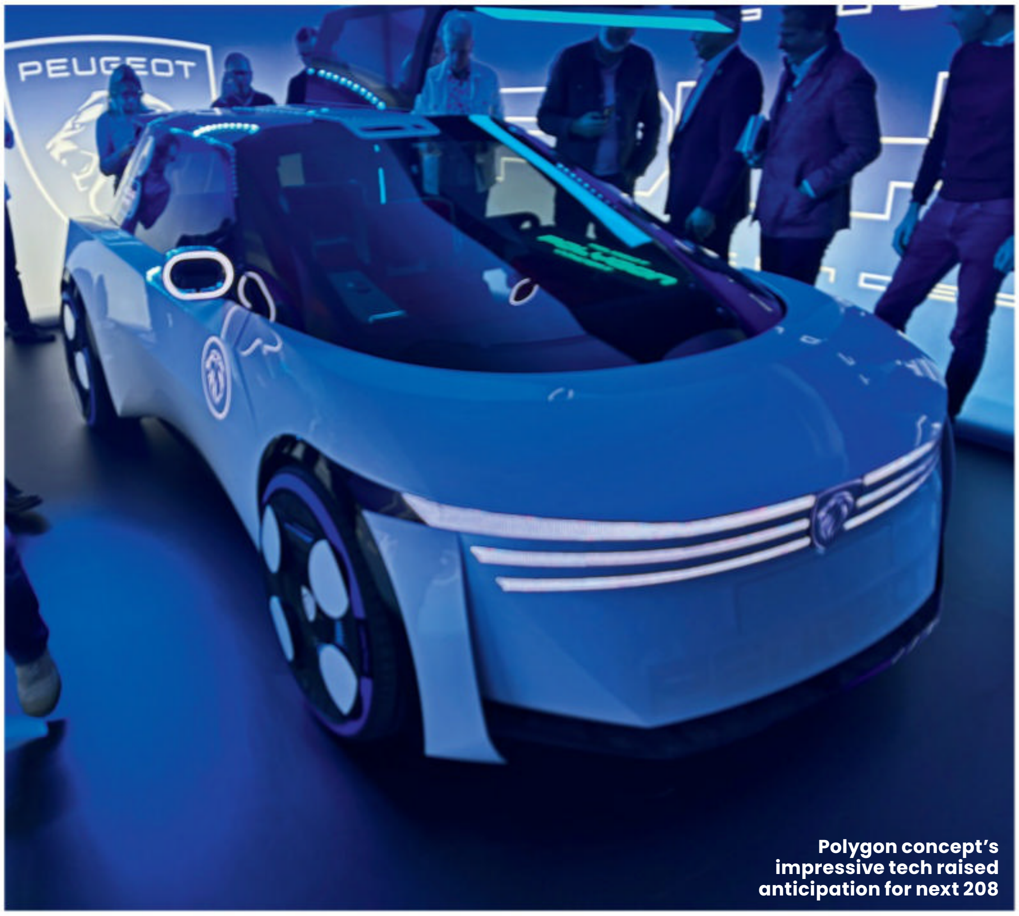
There has been lots of learned reflection from motoring pundits on the slew of challenges that face new Ford of Europe boss Jim Baumbick to get Blue Oval car manufacturing back on track in Europe.

Here's a summary of his challenge: end Focus manufacturing for good, dramatically shrink the workforce, slash the losses of current electric models like the Explorer and Capri (in a market where prices can't be raised) and create new products to replace the Kuga and Puma. Oh yes, and find a replacement for the Fiesta, for many years the company's best-selling car. Could be a long day's work…

Funnily enough, it's what experts say about Ford's path back into the baby hatchback arena – that it should do a deal with Volkswagen to 'Fiesta-ise' the forthcoming Polo EV – that makes the most sense to me. Having driven and enjoyed the Volkswagen-based Capri and Explorer and had no trouble believing they were Fords in their own right, I don't see why the Blue Oval designers shouldn't pull it off. I just don't relish the wait.

WEDNESDAY

Where do model cars go to die? This question has become urgent, because since lockdown I've been using our dining room as a study and now the Steering Committee wants it back. Dozens of models, including some large Lego creations, have come to live there since March 2020 and now they need new homes. Christmas is helping, because stuff gets snapped up at this time of the year on the Google market as presents, but the world needs a year-round solution or the system will surely get clogged and a thriving industry will falter. Apart from buying a bigger house or adding an extension to our present one, I'm not sure what it is.

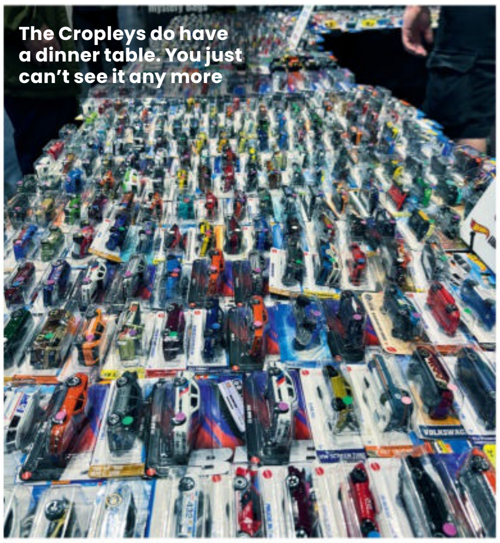


Polygon concept's impressive tech raised anticipation for next 208

THURSDAY

I was reinducted temporarily into the Car of the Year jury to represent Autocar's current judge, Mark Tisshaw, on a trip to Portugal to see the deeply impressive new Peugeot Polygon concept.

Company bosses freely admit this handsome car presages the next 208, arriving in 2027. Don't expect gullwing doors, the designers advise, but otherwise the concept has helpful overtones of the forthcoming supermini.



The Cropleys do have a dinner table. You just can't see it any more

> "It's dead obvious why Peugeot needs to make a beautiful car"

It's dead obvious why Peugeot needs to make a beautiful car and publicise it two years ahead: mortal enemy Renault has been having phenomenal success with its 5 and 4 and expects more of the same from the Twingo, due soon.

FRIDAY

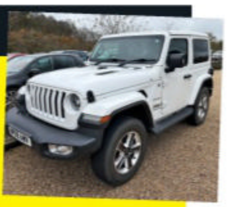
We were supposed actually to drive the Polygon concept, to try its pioneering Hypersquare by-wire steering system, but a biblical Portuguese deluge made Peugeot understandably reluctant to take it out. So we tried Hypersquare in a 2008 prototype instead.

It has numerous advantages, simplifying a car's frontal structure as well as introducing much more variability of gearing and rim effort than conventional systems. New Peugeot chief Alain Favey wants to offer Hypersquare as an option on all but the cheapest new 208 models of 2027.

When you drive, your hands clasp a peculiar-looking but ergonomically excellent rectangular steering 'wheel' (how soon before ancient dimwits start reprising the Austin Allegro's 'quartic' wheel?) that speeds the gearing as much as five times at ultra-low speed, meaning you can reverse-park the car without moving your hands more than a quarter of a turn on the wheel.

The issue for me is a lack of expected vibration travelling up the steering column, which leads to a feeling of isolation. And I'm still wondering if you feel a desirable effort loading in long, fast bends, because I wasn't able to drive fast enough to find out. Peugeot's engineers are still tuning the system, and what they've achieved so far makes me reckon they will succeed.

AND ANOTHER THING



News that Audi is planning a Land Rover Defender rival fell on sceptical ears (mine) until I chanced to wander through a car park and saw this excellent short-wheelbase Jeep Wrangler. Suddenly I remembered that there's more than one way to skin a cat. A second later, I recalled that Audi's new design chief used to be a major player at Land Rover when the current Defender was new. So Audi's new off-roader could be a serious machine indeed.

GET IN TOUCH
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PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

Our spy shots of the next-generation Mercedes-Benz E-Class (News, 12 November) suggest that what's going to happen next with that car is what happened with the GLC over the summer: an end to the weird, soap bar-looking EQ electric models and an alignment with the combustion models.

"If you were told this was the next-gen combustion GLC, you would say 'yes, it's the next logical step: it looks like a GLC'," boss Ola Källenius said of Mercedes' new electric SUV last month. And I think it's now safe to assume that Mercedes' next E-Class-sized electric executive saloon will be very much integrated into the range as an identifiable E-Class variant too.

Internal documents apparently describe the EQE replacement as having an "iconic E-Class three-box design", with a "very status-oriented wheelbase offering maximum space and comfort". In other words, it will be a big Merc.

This strikes me as an inherently sensible move. Mercedes' ultra-streamlined EQ EVs haven't achieved the same resonance as its traditional-looking ICE cars. The E-Class, like the S-Class and to a lesser extent the SUVs, have such a strong reputation that they would be barmy not to tap into it.

In EQ, Mercedes created a new brand that didn't outwardly signal the values that existing models had spent – by individual model line – decades establishing. The first unibody Ponton-series Mercedes, whose lineage can be drawn directly to the modern E-Class, arrived in 1953. Why would one decide that reputation was no longer important?

Reintegrating an electric executive saloon back into the traditional fold makes particular sense to me, then: it's the E-Class you've known and respected all your life but now it offers the option of a zero-emissions powertrain. Smart.

Mercedes' EQ EVs won't live beyond a single generation

Stellantis likes doing the same, because it means it can build one model and be flexible about the proportion of powertrains that it fits: it views electric propulsion as just an alternative to a petrol or diesel or hybrid system, figuring that what you actually want is a Peugeot 208 or a Vauxhall Astra, then secondarily you're just choosing how best to power it. And if more people want EVs, fine: the factories just build fewer petrol ones, rather than having entire models at the mercy of EV adoption rates.

I'd think that, by now, we would see the start of consensus on what works best for car makers when it comes to this (electric-only and new brands excepted, of course) – and that for legacy manufacturers (for want of a better phrase for them), giving customers the cars they know and like, just with differing levels of electrification, would be the answer.

> **"I'm still trying to find a reason beyond perception, or vibes"**

Yet not everybody is making a success of it this way. The Renault 5 has been reborn as an EV only and it seems to be doing just fine for itself. Some of Hyundai's EVs wear the Ioniq tag rather than being electric variants of pre-existing models. And even within the big manufacturer groups there isn't outright consensus: Skoda is continuing to offer unique EV models happily, whereas Volkswagen is rowing back on its ID brand towards names that we already know and love. At some point surely we will call the forthcoming ID Polo just the Polo?

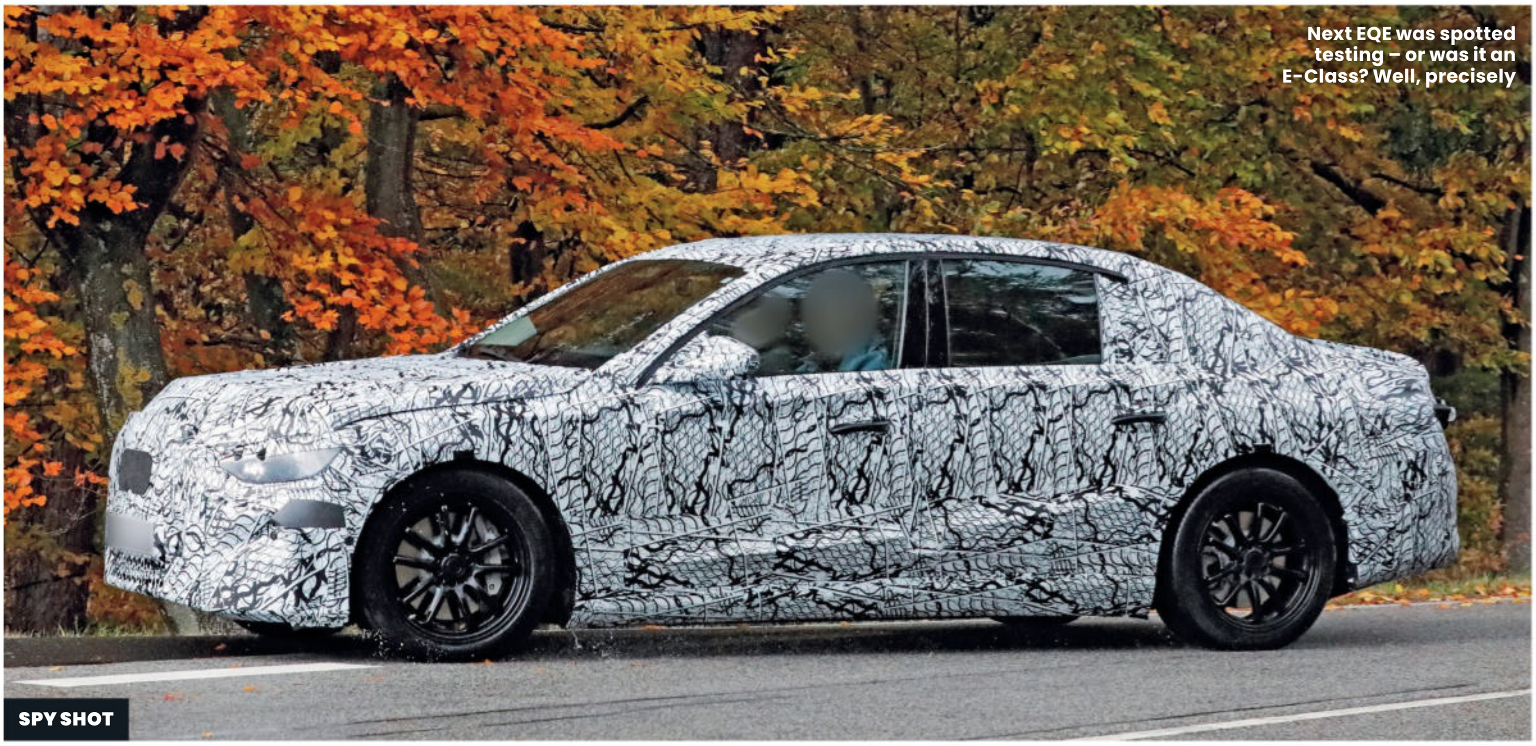
So why is it that some new EV sub-brands work and some don't? Can one identify why, specifically, it's better in some cases to have a spin-off EV badge but in others it's better to integrate EV models into the conventional line-up? Why does an Ioniq work when an EQ doesn't?

I'm still trying to find a reason beyond perception, or vibes. Skoda doesn't have reputational skin in compact crossovers, so it can have separate EV and ICE models with differing names and it makes no difference. Yet if it were to introduce an electric family saloon/estate, wouldn't one want it to be an Octavia?

Take a big electric Kia SUV: I couldn't care less what it's called; it's not like they've had one for aeons. But if Mercedes is to give us an electric luxury saloon, I'd still like it to be an S-Class.

Which brings me to BMW: the i4 is kinda pitched as a battery-powered 3 Series, yet the upcoming 3 Series-sized Neue Klasse electric car is going to be called the i3, even though we recently had a very different one of those, and even though the 3 Series has decades of reputation behind it. Is that fine? It sort of feels fine to me. What do your vibes say?

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com



Next EQE was spotted testing – or was it an E-Class? Well, precisely

SPY SHOT

RACING LINES

Damien Smith

Formula 1's car and power rules have been overhauled for 2026

Even before this tightly fought season is done, attention is already switching to Formula 1 in 2026. At Imola earlier this month, the new Cadillac team took a clandestine bow, as Sergio Pérez lapped a plain-black, 2023-spec car provided by power supplier Ferrari. In Munich, Audi revealed a concept livery – silver, black and red, of course – ahead of its own debut as the regeneration of Sauber nears completion (see p50 for more).

New entities in F1 always create a buzz – but it's the latest technical regulation changes that's generating the loudest hum. Not five minutes since the current formula was introduced in 2022, here we go again. Always cast as the biggest rules rewrite since, well, at least the last one, these really do look game-changing – but not necessarily for the better.

IT'S GETTING COMPLICATED

Next year's F1 cars will be lighter, smaller and nimbler, which sounds like progress. Weight will be down 30kg to 768kg and length and width will be reduced by 200mm and 100mm respectively. Pirelli's tyres will remain at 18in, but the fronts will be narrower by 25mm, the rears by 30mm.

The complicated bit is the power source and its implications for racing. In a bid to appeal more directly to car manufacturers (which you have to say has worked, given the new entries from Cadillac and Audi and Ford's return with Red Bull), the promise is an even split of power from the turbocharged V6 engine – newly running on 100% sustainably sourced fuel – and the electric element. That means a massive triple increase in electrical power.

> **“It will dramatically change the way the drivers race”**

This will dramatically change the way the drivers race. Out goes the drag reduction system (DRS) on the rear wing but movable aero will increase front and back, via 'Z-mode' to enhance downforce and 'X-mode' to reduce drag. And a power boost will be available for chasing cars (those up to a second behind, as with DRS now). Energy saving and then where that energy is utilised will be key. More overtaking is promised – although we've heard that one before. But how will it work in practice? TV broadcasters are already sweating to ensure their audiences can fully understand what they're watching.

I must admit I'm worried. Making motorsport more complicated to follow doesn't necessarily make it better. In fact, the opposite is often true. And I'm not the only one to harbour doubts.

THE WRIGHT VIEW

This summer I was lucky enough to spend time with one of F1's most influential engineers. Peter Wright is regarded as the father of ground-effect aerodynamics in F1 (although he was quick to acknowledge the heavy influence of the great American pioneer Jim Hall and his Chaparral Can-Am and sports cars). Wright designed a BRM 'wing car' that never saw the light of day in the late 1960s, then nailed the concept on the game-changing Lotus 78 and subsequent 79, in which Mario Andretti and Ronnie Peterson dominated the 1978 season. In the 1980s, Wright pioneered active suspension in F1, breaking more ground in 1987 when Ayrton Senna scored 'real' Lotus's final GP wins using his system. His influence then switched to improving safety – a challenge he relished as much as making cars go quicker.

Even an all-time F1 legend could learn from Peter Wright

There was a lot to cover when I met him in his beautiful off-grid home near the Welsh border in Herefordshire, and it was a morning I shall never forget. Especially now, since Peter died on 6 November, aged 79.

Of course we talked about his incredible past, but I was also keen to hear about his take on the new F1 rules, especially as he was among the architects of the current regulations. He pulled out a comparison to all-electric Formula E – of which he was not a fan.

"Formula E is very strategic, which you can't see unless you are a serious anorak," he said. "That may happen a bit with F1 next year, because you're rationing people on their energy for overtaking and boosting. Explaining that story is going be quite hard. They've got a limit on energy per hour, which is the metered fuel; a limit on energy per race, which is energy per mile; and then they've got a recovery of energy per lap. And the driver has got to figure all that lot out, or his race engineer has by using AI. Is that going to entertain? Interesting to see...

"If it enables more and better racing, great. There's nothing technically interesting in the new regulations per se, in that the engines are turbocharged V6s, just like now. It's got a bit less horsepower, more electrical kilowatts, and that starts to get quite complicated. Which engine manufacturer is best? You probably wouldn't put money on anyone other than Mercedes. Then it will be down to which driver and race engineer masters the strategic stuff. But will we be able to see what the hell is going on?"

It's heartbreaking that Peter won't be around to find out.

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

Letter of the week

THE DAMAGE IS DONE

Everything we do is driven by you: that was the marketing mantra of Ford in the 1990s, but it seems to have forgotten. As a lifelong Ford fan, I'm dismayed at the brand's slow demise in Europe, and your recent article (News, 29 October) filled me with sadness.

Through my childhood I was ferried around in a succession of Ford company cars, and once I earned my driving gloves in the late '90s, it was only natural that I chose the Blue Oval. By then the engineers were in charge, giving us dynamically brilliant cars such as the glum-faced Fiesta with its zingy, zesty 1.25 and the superbly composed Focus, which frankly embarrassed the competition. I loved those cars, and for a time Ford seemed like an indomitable force.

The landscape has changed exponentially, of course, and Ford's mis-steps in the intervening years are well documented. Perhaps too quick to embrace an all-electric future and not agile enough to change course when consumer appetite was not aligned. But you cannot abandon loyal customers with impunity, and exiting the supermini segment in particular was an egregious mistake – the worst example of industrial self-harm I can remember.

We're now in an era of unprecedented choice, especially with the proliferation of value-focused Chinese brands, and consumers abandoned by Ford may well be happy to find new homes.

I hope I'm wrong, but I fear that Ford's efforts may now be too little, too late.

Thomas McInnes, via email

NO QUESTIONS ASKED

My mother conducted market research interviews in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She was proud of how the Ford Cortina was heavily influenced by the research she did.

The main finding was customers wanted as much car as they could get for the money, with room for the family, modern styling and a sporty image, but were not very concerned about having the latest tech. Ford delivered on those features and attributes and success followed.

Fast forward to today and you have to wonder if companies do any market research before spending billions on a new car. Not one of my friends or relations really wants any new car on the market.

Electric cars of today are likely to be seriously obsolete in a short time, as the tech moves forward so fast. Plus the charging infrastructure is a joke, with non-universal payment methods, reliability issues, long charging times, queues and cost.

The roads and parking spaces have not grown but cars are more obese than ever. The styling is overly aggressive; where has elegance gone? Interiors usually have dark, gloomy headlining and tiny windows with thick pillars. And then there's the ergonomic disaster that are the screens.

With advanced simulators, manufacturers could easily test new interior ideas on customers, but it appears they do not.

No wonder the industry is in a mess. After more than a century of motoring, people do know what they want. Just ask. Please.

Richard Chandler
Comberbach, Cheshire

SURE BEATS AN SUV

We needed a city car so plumped for a Volkswagen Polo 1.0 TSI R-Line. It's a stunningly good package and driver experience: light, frugal, great engine, quality materials, looks that won't age. A joy. Seriously.

Following an accident, I was given a Ford Kuga Hybrid while repairs were carried out. I was shocked by how poor it was. It slammed over every bump and droned along with its irritating driveline whine. Stopping it required two phases: one, brake; two, brake harder after realising the weight of the thing wasn't slowing as I had expected. It did return around 40% electric running, which was a nice surprise, but my god, why are we moving to these super-heavy vehicles? I give this Kuga three and a half stars.

If you live within 20 miles of your work or mostly drive in the city, please try a Polo alongside any SUV. It's brilliant. In fact, fitted with the matrix headlights, it's five stars.

David Greenly
Via email

Polo is a marvel, says David, and we won't argue

IGNORE THE DOUBTERS

I have just read Martin Morris's letter about people's reactions to him purchasing a Ferrari Portofino at the age of 77 (12 November).

I am 74 and I own a Portofino M that I purchased new in 2023. All I can say to him is good luck, it's a wonderful car, and don't let anyone put you off: they're all just jealous.

Like Martin, I've owned several Porsches and Aston Martins, but I've also been lucky enough to have owned eight Ferraris. My Portofino M is probably going to be the last. It drives fantastically, it has a wonderful sound and I feel fantastic when I drive it. Just enjoy it, because there are plenty of people who will praise you for buying such a car.

People's connotations of Ferrari are completely wrong at the end of the day. It's just a car. But it is the most fantastic car and it is the most fantastic brand, and I have to say I loved them all.

Robert Harris
Shenley, Hertfordshire

Riding Car by name, bike by nature

John is still getting his fast car kicks aged 90

AGEING RAPIDLY

We sympathise with Martin Morris and his love of fast cars, but have faith in yourself: I am 90 and have the latest, 400bhp Audi RS3 in my garage, which has already done 54,000 miles after two years, and my 85-year-old partner has just taken delivery of a Volkswagen Golf R. You are not alone in being different!

John Pike
Yarwell, Northamptonshire

JAMIE'S MAGIC PORSCHE

My message to Martin Morris for buying a Ferrari at the age of 77 is: good for you! I am 75 and bought a new Porsche 911 Carrera 4 last year. I told the sales lady that I was probably one of her younger customers. Apart from the usual mickey-taking, my family seems quite happy about it. My wife said that had it been her, she would have invested the money in a horse.

Nice cars such as Porsches and Ferraris can be perfectly enjoyable when driven at sensible speeds and within the law. I'd suggest criticism levelled at Mr Morris should be put down to a touch of sour grapes.

I'd also add that on numerous occasions people have come up to me at filling stations to say what a nice car my 911 is.

Jamie Greenwell
Woodbridge, Suffolk

LIES EXPOSED

You recently published the most illuminating insight into the great EV debate I have seen to date: that seven in 10 Vauxhall Fronteras sold are EVs (First drives, 5 November).

This demonstrates that once price is taken out of the equation, most people prefer an electric car.

A false narrative has taken hold, promoted by vested interests, that EV demand is lacking when the truth is that a price premium of about £10k and few EVs in the most popular segments have been the reasons sales haven't been higher.

I understand that car makers would prefer to sell more profitable ICE vehicles for as long as they can, hence the latest attempts to delay the 2035 ban, but I'm glad to say good Autocar journalism revealed that the reason they give to justify that is founded on a lie. Well done.

H Rowlands
Via email

It's not quite so simple. SMMT boss Mike Hawes said in September: "With record ZEV uptake, massive industry investment is paying off, despite demand still trailing ambition."

CONFUSED PIONEERS

Gottlieb Daimler certainly didn't invent the car in 1885 (From the archive, 5 November), rather he invented the motorcycle. Although I can understand your mistake, as it was Karl Benz who invented the car in 1885, and Daimler and Benz became one and the same in 1926.

Barry Brown
Via email

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

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Richard Webber takes an eye-catching road trip through Scotland in a BMW M3 CS Touring in pursuit of the country's finest festive fayre

ROAD TEST

THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL TRACTOR

Matt Prior brings you a Christmas Road Test you won't want to miss: a 919bhp John Deere 9RX 830 with 32 gears and 3135lb ft. Yes, 3135lb ft

MOTORSPORT

AUTOCAR vs F1 DRIVER

How fit is an F1 driver compared with Autocar's rapid marathon man? We find out at Alpine F1 HQ

INSIGHT

YOU'LL SLOT RIGHT IN...

Felix Page has a monster crash in a 200mph racer. Fortunately it's at the Molesey Scalextric Club

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The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

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FIRST DRIVES

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

TESTED 12.11.25, LISBON, PORTUGAL **DELIVERIES** APRIL 2026

VOLKSWAGEN T-ROC

Incredibly popular small crossover enters its second generation aiming to right some wrongs

It says 'T-Roc' on the back, but one of the engineers called this newcomer "the anti-Diess car".

The years under Herbert Diess weren't Volkswagen's happiest. The company was weathering the Dieselgate storm and getting to grips with electrification. In the process, sacrifices had to be made, and the results were the software glitches and iffy plastics in the Mk8 Golf and the ID 3. Thomas Schäfer is the CEO now, things are going better for Volkswagen and there's some time – and, importantly, money – again for niceties.

The T-Roc has quickly become part of the furniture at Wolfsburg, but it's worth remembering that it hasn't actually been around for that long. Whereas the Tiguan is already in its third generation, the original T-Roc was introduced only in 2017. Because the Tiguan had outgrown its original billing as the tall Golf, the T-Roc was created to fill that gap – very successfully, it must be said. It charmed us into a four-and-a-half-star verdict with its wide range of engines and surprisingly game handling and ended up selling more than two million examples.

Whereas the original was a tall Golf with a jazzed-up Polo interior, the new T-Roc has nobler bones. It uses the latest MQB Evo toolset from the Tiguan, Skoda Kodiaq etc. That means it's a bigger car than before, at 122mm longer. Some of that is in the wheelbase, but a big chunk is in the overhangs, which had to grow in order for the car to still score five stars with Euro NCAP (although it hasn't officially been tested yet).

Front and rear mimic latest Tiguan but side profile is classic T-Roc

Bespoke door releases are physical not electronic, unlike on ID models

It's just 9mm wider across the body, but the front track is 30mm wider for a more purposeful stance and better turn-in. Suspension is always by MacPherson struts at the front and a multi-link at the back, even on the entry-level versions. As before, adaptive dampers are an option, which is quite unusual at this end of the market. A new compound for the various bushings in the chassis is said to reduce the impact harshness, without compromising lateral stiffness.

To begin with, the powertrain line-up is very familiar, with simply two variations of the 1.5-litre eTSI four-cylinder mild-hybrid turbocharged petrol engine: 114bhp or 148bhp. Both come with a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox and front-wheel drive.

There are more in the pipeline, though. The trusty 'EA888' 2.0-litre four returns with mild electrical assistance and either 201bhp or 329bhp in the T-Roc R. Next year there will be a pair of full hybrids; so far, Volkswagen is saying only that they will have 134bhp and 168bhp, but word on the grapevine is that this will be a Honda-style system using the 1.5 TSI engine. Even though the platform allows it, there are no plug-in hybrids planned, because Volkswagen doesn't expect enough demand.

Even more than in the chassis, a Diess-orcism has been performed on the cabin. Although the T-Roc sits below the Tiguan, it feels a bit more premium. There are new door handles, which you pull up rather than out, and the materials feel like an upgrade, including next to no gloss black plastic. The silvery strip around the dashboard and the Mini-style knitted fabric on the dash add a bit of visual interest, and on the higher-spec versions there are pieces of perforated leatherette on the doors that let the ambient light through – a neat touch.

The much-maligned touch bar makes another appearance, but I don't mind it. It lights up, you tap the red bit to make the air warmer, the blue bit for colder – plus it's joined by a multi-functional rotary knob that does the volume and drive modes. It's all pretty intuitive, if not quite as good as the original T-Roc's more fulsome array of buttons.

As usual with Volkswagens but unusually for the class, there's a wide range of seat options. The basic ones lack some thigh support but do feature adjustable lumbar support; the upgraded ones are superb.

Knee room is just about sufficient for me, at a long-legged 6ft 2in, to sit behind my driving position, and the rear seat angle is quite comfortable. At 475 litres with some extra space under the floor, the boot is a good size for a small crossover too.

Infotainment is the usual Volkswagen deal. The touchscreen is bigger and more distracting than it needs to be, but the menu layout is very configurable, it responds pretty quickly, most of the major functions are just one tap away and there's wireless phone mirroring.

Given all the talk of wide tracks and multi-links and the somewhat sporty character of the original T-Roc, you might expect great things of this new one. My impression was more of a sophisticated and mature operator.

I got to try only the 1.5 eTSI, which is a very familiar engine. Here it's clearly dampened by plenty of noise insulation, because so long as you're not asking too ▸

TESTER'S NOTE

The engineers recommend the 19in wheels, which come with sportier tyres. The 20in tyres have a softer sidewall to maintain ride comfort, but the extra sidewall height of the 19s and the sportier compound give the best compromise of response and comfort. **IV**

> "The original T-Roc underscored VW's sense of fun. This new one feels like a more grown-up car"

◂ much of it, it's very quiet and smooth. Surprisingly, the subjective difference between the 114bhp and 148bhp versions isn't as big as the numbers suggest. Neither feels particularly quick, so I would probably wait for the 2.0 eTSI.

On these smallish turbo engines, fuel consumption is very dependent on driving style. On a mixed route, either version would return 40mpg, but on a less demanding suburban loop I saw more than 50mpg.

I tried one car on 20in wheels and adaptive dampers, another on 18in wheels and passive suspension. Ride-wise, they felt quite similar, which suggests that the fancy suspension largely cancels out the ill effects of the huge wheels. It manages to avoid the brittleness over potholes that we've sometimes complained about in Volkswagen Group cars with big wheels and adaptive dampers but stops short of being distinguishably isolating.

In the very wet and slippery conditions of the Lisbon launch event, at least, the steering lacked the usual feel that Volkswagens tend to have, and the general handling balance was one of safe and steady understeer.

The T-Roc also introduces a new generation of assisted driving systems, for better and for worse.

The bad news is that Volkswagen has finally had to give in and fit an interior camera for the driver monitoring, and as a result it does nag if you look at the instruments or screen for too long. On the upside, it's still one of the less intrusive systems and easy to turn off.

Meanwhile, the adaptive cruise control (which is also one of the smoothest and most responsive of its kind) now does automatic lane changes, albeit not in the torrential rain of my test drive.

The 'innovation' that I'm most excited about, though, is that you can switch back to standard cruise control if you want to. Apparently it was added back in response to customer feedback, so it wasn't just me who had been going on about it.

Prices haven't been confirmed yet but should start in the low £30,000s, rising to the low £40,000s for very high-spec cars. That's more than the Toyota C-HR and Renault Symbioz, but then the T-Roc is more practical than the former and feels more upmarket than the latter.

Whereas the original T-Roc underscored Volkswagen's sense of fun, this new one feels like a more grown-up car, because of both its softer design and its mature driving manners. It has also taken a step forward in interior space and perceived quality. It's a classic Volkswagen, then: an impressively rounded car, if not terribly exciting.

ILLYA VERPRAET

Array of soft and matt materials revive some of that old VW quality feel

TECH SPEC

VOLKSWAGEN T-ROC 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-LINE

Won't set the world on fire but does everything quite well. More powerful versions might add driver appeal

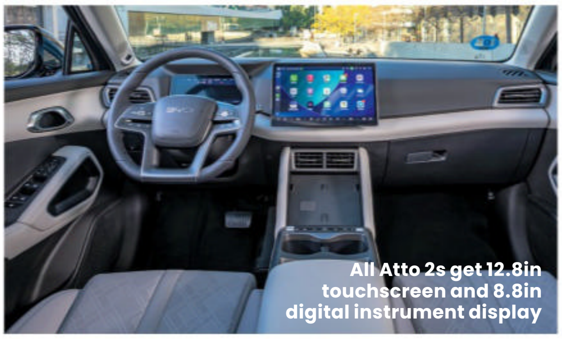
Price £37,500 (est)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus 48V ISG
Power 148bhp at 5000-6000rpm
Torque 184lb ft at 1500-3500rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, FWD
Kerb weight 1399kg
0-62mph 8.9sec
Top speed 132mph
Economy 47.1-51.4mpg
CO_2, tax band 130g/km, 32%
Rivals Nissan Qashqai, Toyota C-HR

TESTED 18.11.25, BARCELONA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** MARCH 2026

BYD ATTO 2 DM-i

Electric compact SUV is retrofitted with a plug-in hybrid powertrain

PHEV shifts smoothly between petrol and electric power



All Atto 2s get 12.8in touchscreen and 8.8in digital instrument display

When the Jeep Renegade 4xe finally shuffles off this mortal coil in the coming months, BYD's new Atto 2 DM-i will take its place as the littlest crossover on sale with a socket on one side and a fuel filler on the other. Not only that, but with prices ranging from around £25,000 for the base model to £28,000 for the bigger-battery variant driven here, it will be the cheapest PHEV too.

Launched recently as an EV, the Atto 2 has been retrofitted with a hybrid powertrain as part of BYD's drive to sustain its rampant growth outside of its Chinese home market in the face of waning global demand for EVs. When we drove the electric Atto 2 we found it rational and sensible but short on visual or dynamic appeal and, powertrain aside, the PHEV version is basically identical, so I will focus on the technical differences here.

A recap, should you need it: DM-i (that's 'Dual-Mode – Intelligent') is BYD's take on a PHEV powertrain. In operation, it's sort of a fusion of Toyota's 'self-charging' hybrid system and Nissan's range-extender-style e-Power one: it uses its petrol engine primarily as a generator to top up its under-floor battery, which then powers the motor driving the wheels. Usually DM-i cars drive on electric power (so working as a series hybrid), but under heavy loads and at a high-speed cruise the engine can also be connected to the wheels to give maximum shove (so working as a parallel hybrid).

Here, in its smallest application, the system works well. It switches between its two power sources cleanly and almost imperceptibly, largely feeling like the electric Atto 2, with decent responsiveness and a pleasing level of pep off the mark but a sensibly shaped torque curve that precludes scrabbling of tyres away from traffic lights.

I had to work hard to get the engine to even audibly chime in (its thrashy, strained drone providing scant reward for doing so) and generally found it easy to forget that I was using any petrol at all. There is a 'hold' mode you can use to drive on ICE power only, but BYD says the system is at its most efficient when operating as a hybrid – and indeed the results speak for themselves.

Take these numbers with a pinch of salt, considering my test conditions weren't totally representative of day-to-day suburban drudgery, but over the course of a demanding 90-minute loop in Spain, comprising busy motorways, tight mountain passes and stop-start inner-city arteries, I drained around half the battery (about 9kWh of energy) and took no more than a few sips out of the fuel tank. That equated to electricity consumption of 9.1mpkWh and fuel economy of 157mpg, which the car told me represented combined consumption in traditional terms of 76.3mpg. But that's contingent on having a full battery to start with; we need a few days on UK roads to really crunch the numbers.

Despite its unusual modus operandi, it's clear that, as with all PHEVs, you need a home charger to make the most of the Atto 2 DM-i. It's unlikely to better the full-hybrid versions of the Toyota Yaris Cross and Renault Captur for efficiency if you don't plug it in regularly, and with a lethargic maximum charging rate of just 6.6kW you would need hours at a public charger to put in any meaningful amount of juice.

If your circumstances allow, then, this is a perfectly recommendable little family car. There's more to write home about here than in the electric Atto 2, in terms of raw, on-paper competitiveness, and it merits recognition for bringing something new to this most hotly contested and crowded market segment.

PHEVs have long been the preserve of the fleet buyer, but there's appeal here for the traditional retail customer with the right lifestyle to make it work.

FELIX PAGE

TECH SPEC

BYD ATTO 2 DM-i BOOST

Does much to make cost-efficient PHEV motoring accessible to a wider group of people but needs to be used properly for best results

Price £28,000 (est)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 259bhp (combined)
Torque 90lb ft (engine), 221lb ft (motor)
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Kerb weight 1620kg
0-62mph 7.5sec
Top speed 112mph
Battery 18.0kWh
Economy 55.4mpg
Electric range 56 miles
CO_2, tax band 41g/km, 9%
Rivals Jeep Renegade 4xe, Toyota C-HR PHEV

TESTER'S NOTE

When will car makers finally crack voice control? BYD's in-car assistant would open a window if I asked very clearly but was flummoxed by any request pertaining to ADAS settings or other in-car functions. **FP**

TESTED 18.11.25, BERKSHIRE **DELIVERIES** DECEMBER

MG S6 EV

Big new SUV bridges gap between MG's core EVs and upmarket IM ones

If I were feeling glib, I'd describe this MG S6 EV as a larger S5 EV – but I'm not, so I won't. That's also beside the point, because you might not know the extent of MG's EV line-up at the moment.

The 4 EV (Volkswagen ID 3-sized), S5 EV (Skoda Elroq-sized) and S6 EV (Skoda Enyaq-sized) all sit on MG's Modular Scalable Platform and form the basis of the Chinese brand's core EV offering.

The upmarket IM sub-brand (with its IM5 and IM6 cars) is the middle ground, then the Cyberster acts as a traditional halo car.

The S6 offers a long range (up to 329 miles for the rear-wheel-drive cars), lots of space and all the kit you would probably want – and does it for a competitive price.

It says a lot about MG that I'm expecting this car to be more than just a numbers game, though – I'm expecting it to be good.

MG has never been one to strictly keep to the slightly archaic 'letter' segments with its sizing and pricing, so at 4.7m long and around £38,000, the S6 rivals different cars in different classes, including the Kia EV5, Renault Scenic, Skoda Enyaq and Volkswagen ID 4. Its S5 sibling is a rival too – but it's easy to distinguish between the pair, as the S6 is larger, has more range and is available with four-wheel drive.

The S6 does bear a strong resemblance to the S5, though, with its low-hanging headlights and a rear light bar that echoes the Cyberster. But it's still pretty anonymous; it has that 'could be nearly any Chinese car' vibe to it.

Propulsion comes from a battery with a usable capacity of 74.3kWh, distributed across three distinct model specifications: two RWD configurations and a flagship dual-motor, 4WD variant. That one gets 357bhp and 398lb ft of torque, yielding a 0-62mph time of 5.1sec, while its WLTP range is 301 miles. It's a bit of a sleeper.

Ride and handling are good – and the steering's even better

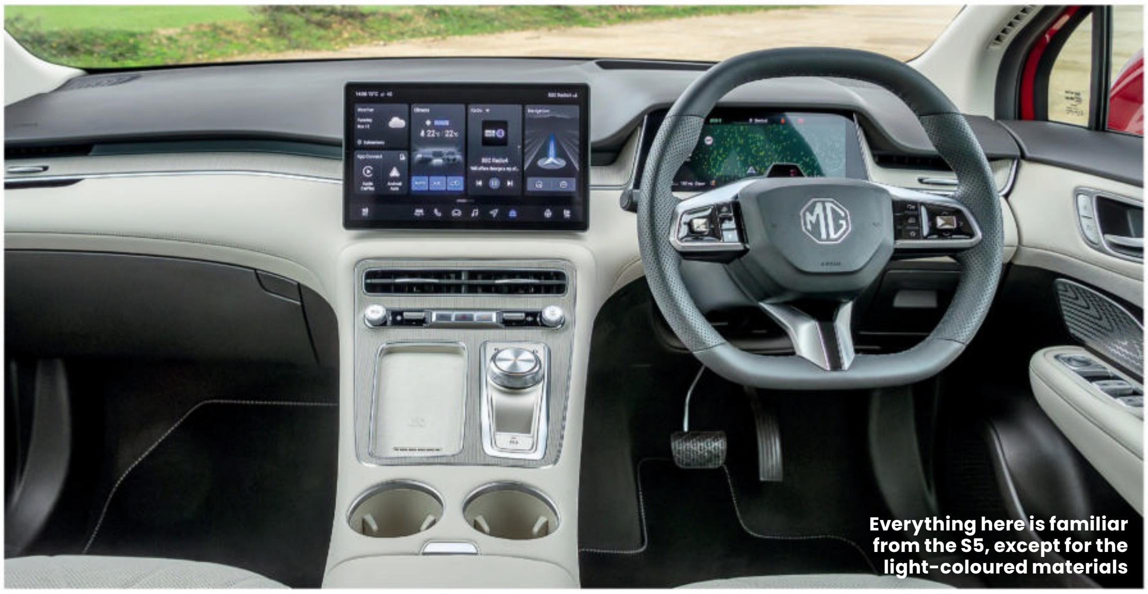
That sprint time is impressive on paper, but the mid-range punch is where it's really felt. Initial get-up-and-go (let's say 0-20mph) can be stifled a bit by cautious traction control, but beyond that and up to motorway speeds there's a wave of steady power that pushes you along.

That's in Sport mode, mind you. In Eco, everything is dulled down quite heavily, but it's still not what you would call slow.

On paper, the single-motor RWD car is more than two seconds tardier to 62mph. You can feel the 143bhp deficit mid-range when driving the two versions of the S6 back to back, but no owner will feel hard done by: it's still plenty fast.

The brakes are good too: natural, consistent and not grabby. You can mess with the level of regeneration, and that all largely works how you'd expect. I'm sure you'd try them all once before deciding your level and then keeping it until you hand the car back to the finance company.

“It adds a tremendous amount of surprise and delight in the way it drives”



Everything here is familiar from the S5, except for the light-coloured materials

TESTER’S NOTE

Boot capacity measures 674 litres with the rear seats upright or 1910 litres with them folded down. There’s a 124-litre frunk too. **MSc**

The steering is pretty communicative for something of this ilk and the drive modes are nicely tuned, with Sport giving a touch more feedback rather than simply adding weight.

The 4WD car weighs only about 100kg more than the RWD one (not a great deal, considering we’re talking around the two-tonne mark), but it feels significantly heavier on the road. Turn-in isn’t quite as sharp or as effortless and it thuds into undulating roads more. Plus it pitter-patters a touch more at 70mph. It’s still good, just not quite as sweet as the RWD car.

Economy comes in at 3.4mpkWh, and during my testing on a cold day (5deg C) on mixed routes, I got 3.3mpkWh from the 4WD car. Good that it’s close to the WLTP rating but not a fantastic overall number.

Inside, the S6 scores strongly for buttons: there are physical controls for the heating, fan and volume. There’s no permanent control for the drive modes, but you can create a shortcut so it sits at the bottom of the menu on the 12.8in touchscreen.

The rear-view camera is very laggy; if I were to use it for more than 30 seconds, I think it would give me a headache.

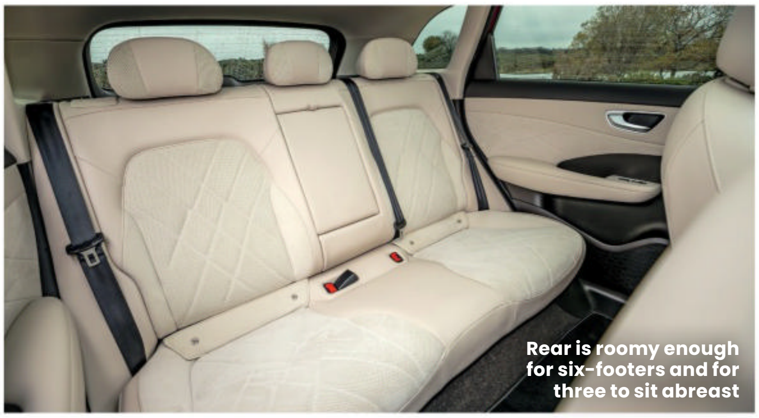
In my testing, the wireless Apple CarPlay was faultless (Android Auto is available too). The cooled wireless charging pad is a nice touch as well.

It doesn’t feel cheap in here: there are no particularly nasty pieces of plastic nor any rattles or squeaks. The seats are fine but don’t come with real leather or real suede.

I was expecting the S6 to be good, and it is. In quantifiable terms (range, price, size), it pretty much nails what it set out to achieve: do what the competition does for less. But it adds a tremendous amount of surprise and delight in the way it drives too. The steering’s feedback is good, it flows down a road with minimal fuss, the ride is good, it’s quick and the nannying systems can be turned off fairly quickly.

MG is making a conscious effort to chase retail customers, and I can certainly see people heading down to their local dealerships for an S6.

MURRAY SCULLION



Rear is roomy enough for six-footers and for three to sit abreast

TECH SPEC

MG S6 EV DUAL MOTOR TROPHY

Another MG product that could just well have come from a more established European firm

Price £43,995
Engine Two permanent magnet synchronous motors
Power 357bhp
Torque 398lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2005kg
0-62mph 5.1sec
Top speed 124mph
Battery 77.0/74.3kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 301 miles, 3.4mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals Kia EV5, Renault Scenic, Skoda Enyaq

ROAD TESTS

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5787**

GEELY EX5

Chinese giant makes its first move in the UK: an SUV to rival the MG S5 EV

MODEL TESTED
GEELY EX5 MAX
Price £33,240
Power 214bhp
Torque 236lb ft
0-60mph 7.4sec
30-70mph 5.9sec
Top speed 109mph (claimed)
70-0mph 46.9m (11deg C, damp)
Range 195/175/245 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 3.2/2.9/4.1mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 94kW

Most of us have heard of Geely by now. It's clearly a force to be reckoned with, having bought up a significant slice of the European automotive industry. Volvo, Polestar, Lotus, LEVC (which makes the TX taxi) and Smart are all owned, at least in part, by the Chinese giant. Zeekr and Lynk&Co, both of which are sold in continental Europe and may come to the UK at some point, are also Geely brands.

But like some reclusive billionaire with fingers in many pies, the Geely brand itself has so far been invisible in Europe. But that's now changing, because the Geely brand plans to launch a range of its own cars over the next few years.

The company says it's here to stay and therefore it intends to be represented in all of the key segments. Next year, we'll see a C-segment plug-in hybrid SUV, an electric supermini hatchback and a plug-in hybrid seven-seat SUV. But things kick off with the EX5, a car in one of the fastest-growing classes of all: C-segment electric SUVs. Also in this class are the Skoda Elroq, Kia EV3, Renault Scenic and numerous others.

The EX5 is going straight into a full road test to demonstrate what the mothership has to offer.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★☆☆

PROS Inoffensive looks; LFP battery; potential for other versions
CONS Very bland and forgettable; not particularly innovative

We would normally dispute the popular assertion that all electric crossovers look the same, but the Geely EX5 is not helping to disprove that notion. It really does look incredibly generic. It provides all the default 2025 design cues, with a rear light bar that looks vaguely like a petrol Porsche Macan's, flush door handles, bi-colour aero wheels and a smooth, grille-less front. It's supposedly inspired by Song-dynasty porcelain, but we're not seeing it. The upside of the featureless design is a creditably slippery drag coefficient of 0.27.

Given the corporate connection with Volvo, one might assume that the EX5 sits on a shared platform, but instead it uses Geely's own, and presumably lower-cost, Global Intelligent New Energy Architecture, or GEA (yes, there do seem to be a few letters missing from that initialism). After all, Geely isn't new to producing cars itself. It has been doing it since 1997 and sold more than two million Geely-branded cars in 2024.

Geely's first car. Red bow was optional

The platform is suitable for electric, plug-in hybrid and range-extender powertrains, but the EX5 is being launched here with just one battery and motor combination: 214bhp and 60.2kWh (usable capacity). In China, there is also a 68.4kWh option, which Geely would do well to bring here at some point. The battery itself is of Geely's own design and manufacture, though it seems similar in construction to BYD's Blade battery, with a relatively small number of long, flat cells arranged into a pack under the floor.

In other markets, such as China and Australia, there is already a range-extender-style plug-in hybrid version called the Starray, which is likely to be destined for the UK next year.

INTERIOR

★★★⯪☆

PROS Perceived quality; boot and rear-seat space; storage room
CONS Vinyl smell; front seats

With its vaguely octagonal steering wheel, flowing door cards and rising, asymmetric centre console, the EX5 holds a little more visual interest inside than the average new Chinese car, but not very much. On most trim levels, there is a choice between cream-coloured upholstery and the very dark blue of our test car.

In terms of their visual and tactile qualities, at least, the materials also seem at or above the class average. The centre console is topped with a fairly attractive matt line-pattern plastic and many other surfaces are soft to the touch. The door handles look straight out of a modern Honda and feel substantial enough. Like BYD, however, Geely makes liberal use of faux leather, which gives off a pervasive and deeply unpleasant vinyl smell.

Typically for a Chinese car, the EX5 is not short of equipment. Wireless charging, keyless entry and heating for the front seats and steering wheel are all standard and Max trim adds a panoramic sunroof that actually opens, a 16-speaker, 1000W sound system, ventilated massage seats and a head-up display.

Occupants are well catered for when it comes to storage, with fairly roomy door bins and cupholders, and a big space under the centre console. A drawer under the rear seats lets you hide even more stuff.

Seat comfort, however, isn't so good. The EX5's promotional materials boast of first-class comfort thanks to seats with 5+1-layer cushions and massage function. However, the seats are set far too high, lack cushion tilt adjustment and are overly soft and unsupportive, giving some testers backache on longer drives.

■ Flush door handles are similar to those found on Kias, hinging inwards and revealing a keyhole. They're quite reliable at popping out when you approach the car with the key and they feel reasonably mechanical when you open the door.

■ EX5's strength is its hidden storage. It has no frunk but there is a deep well under the boot floor, as well as this drawer beneath the back seats. Rear passengers have dedicated air vents, but there's no separate zone for the climate control. The rear seats aren't heated.

Arguably, the place to be is the second row, which has generous head room, adjustable backrest angle and an unusually good seating position for an EV, with a floor that doesn't seem excessively raised. The benefit of those high-set front seats is that rear passengers have space to slot their feet beneath them. Boot space is slightly behind the rest of the class, at 410 litres (Kia EV3: 460 litres, MG S5: 453 litres), but it does offer a further 51 litres in a deep well under the floor.

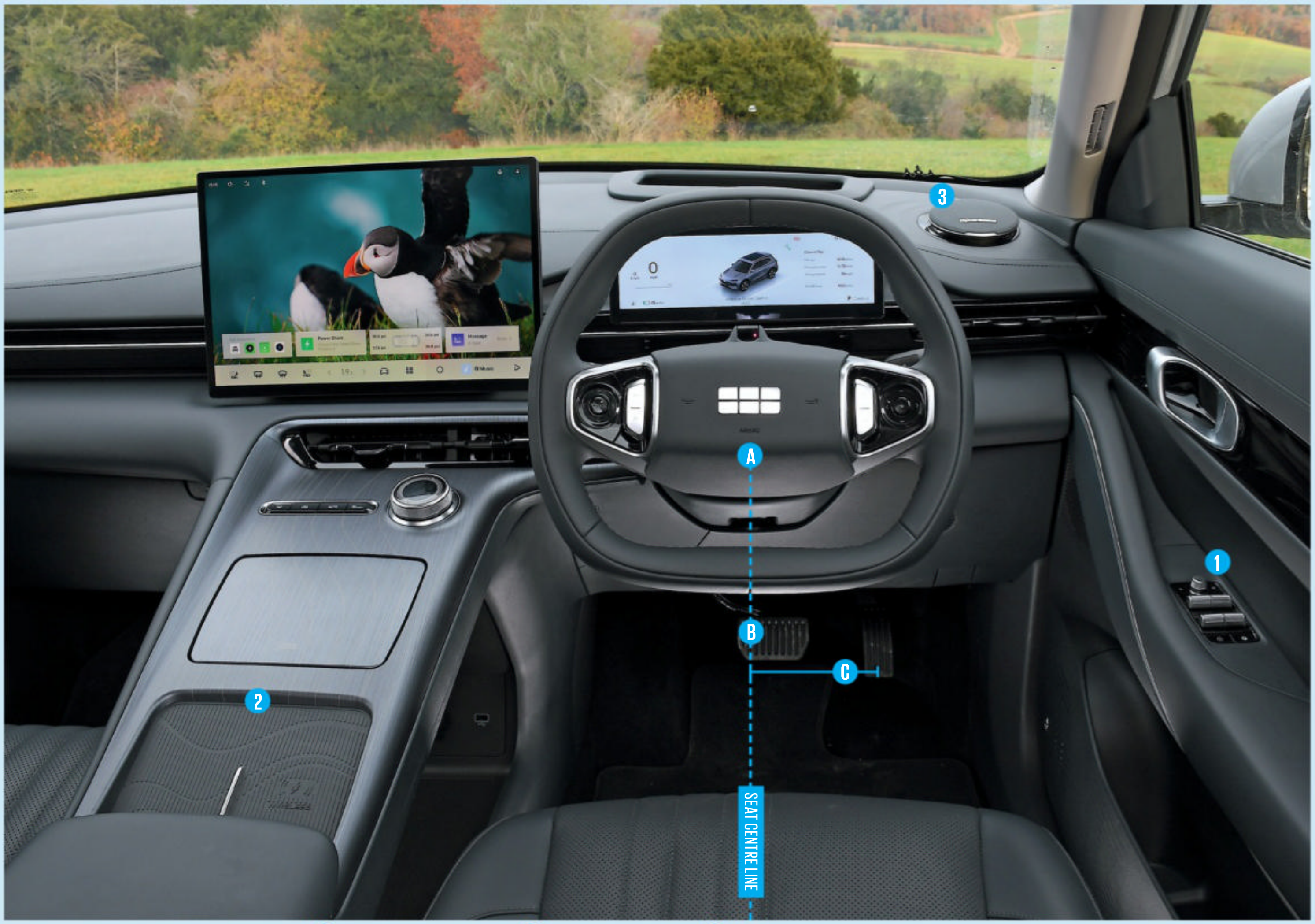
MULTIMEDIA

★★☆☆☆

PROS Crisp screen graphics; not prone to lag
CONS Too many essential controls are housed in the screen; haphazard layout and menu structure; unresponsive 'buttons'; basic navigation

The EX5's interior would be functional and well appointed if it wasn't for the misconceived user interface and multimedia. It is quite typical in encompassing a large central touchscreen and a smaller driver display and it ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW



① You press the window switches forwards to lower, backwards to raise, prompting a heated debate whether this is the right way. All agree that conventional switches would be better.

② The wireless charging pad barely manages to charge an iPhone 17 but does noticeably heat it up. The cover in front hinges up and reveals two reasonably commodious cupholders.

③ The Flyme sound system has 1000W and 16 speakers, including these neat tweeters with their ripple effect in the dashboard. Sound quality is quite good, though not exceptional.

WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 0mm Ⓒ Accelerator offset 150mm right. Pedal and steering column orientation are conventional, but with the high seating position you feel perched over the controls.

◂ scores some points for offering a head-up display on the top trim. The controls for the mirrors are mercifully conventional.

However, physical controls are otherwise few. The buttons on the steering wheel are mostly unmarked, which is needlessly confusing. There's a supposedly customisable button, but you can't map any useful functions to it, and while the big rotary controller bodes well, it operates only a few functions (such as the media volume and the cabin temperature) and switching between them is unintuitive.

Then we get to the central touchscreen, which is very similar to what we have seen in BYDs and the Mazda 6e. Even though the display is enormous, the home screen doesn't do anything useful like display a map or media controls. Instead, it lets you decide whether you would rather look at some puffins, a guinea pig or a cityscape. We would argue that you should be looking at the road instead.

Although some (but not all) of the climate controls are permanently accessible in a toolbar at the bottom, you have to hit the 'buttons' in precisely the right spot for them to work. In practice, dialling down the heated seats requires several presses. You can resort to the voice control, which works okay, but you shouldn't have to. The built-in navigation isn't particularly clear or very aware of traffic.

Generally, when you dive into the menus, information and buttons are thrown at you in a small font and with little sense of hierarchy. The saving grace is that there's wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

PERFORMANCE

★★⯪☆☆

PROS Fast enough overall; decent braking performance
CONS Unresponsive accelerator; regeneration difficult to control; grabby brakes

With 214bhp from its single front motor and a kerb weight of 1765kg, the EX5 has entirely average specifications. The claimed 0-62mph time of 7.1sec is not quite as quick as that of the MG S5 EV, but it's perfectly adequate. However, the EX5 manages its modest power quite poorly.

The EX5 doesn't particularly struggle with traction, like some front-wheel-drive electric cars do. However, this isn't thanks to some sophisticated traction control system but because the power is released only gradually, even if you press the pedal fully. From around 30mph, the car is quick enough, but below that it feels quite sluggish. When you're performing a hasty three-point turn with traffic rapidly approaching, waiting for the power to gently ramp up is a little nerve-racking.

This laggy delivery is borne out by our test data. Even when fully charged, the EX5 missed its claimed acceleration time by some margin. The wet conditions didn't help, but equally most cars at this sort of power output are perfectly capable of achieving their performance benchmarks. The Mini Aceman SE, for instance, hit its claimed time exactly in similar conditions. The EX5 loses the best part of a further second at a low state of charge.

Deceleration is no more sophisticated. The brake pedal has a Comfort and a Sport mode, but even the more relaxed of the two is annoyingly sensitive. There's no easy control over the off-throttle regen. Instead, it's adjusted in a settings menu, which offers neither a one-pedal nor a freewheeling mode, and all except the gentlest setting are difficult to judge. Most EVs reserve a part of the accelerator travel to give you fine control over the regen, but in the EX5 there's no such thing. Instead, when you lift off the accelerator, it automatically ramps up. To make things worse, the car usually remembers your preferred setting but will occasionally reset it to Medium, just to keep you on your toes.

Ultimate braking performance was satisfactory. The car recorded a stopping distance in damp conditions that was similar to the MG S5 EV in the dry and bettered it by a couple of metres in the wet.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★⯪☆

PROS Mostly comfortable ride; decent grip
CONS Ride can be floaty; awkward steering wheel

Given Geely owns Volvo and Lotus, it should have access to a lot of expertise from both sides of the dynamic spectrum on how to tune a car for European roads and drivers. Indeed, Lotus allegedly had a small amount of involvement in the EX5. There's no way of knowing how good or bad the starting point was, but the result is no high point.

Like a lot of Chinese cars, the EX5 is fairly softly sprung, giving it quite a gentle primary ride that irons out most big bumps, albeit one that can be a little under-damped and floaty. Meanwhile, thanks to the generous 50-profile tyres, corrugations are cushioned well too. Overall, it's not the most sophisticated or European-feeling car, but the relaxed demeanour is preferable to any misguided sportiness. At a motorway cruise, the cabin proved about averagely hushed, according to our sound meter, and was similar to a Kia EV3 or Renault Scenic.

The handling is matched reasonably well, being mostly safe and steady. Geely has chosen to fit Goodyear tyres instead of some home-market alternative, so there's no particular shortage of grip in either wet or dry conditions. Still, it's not a car that feels like it was subject to any particularly careful tuning.

There's plenty of body roll under hard cornering, as well as some torque steer when you try to power out. Throw some mid-corner bumps into the mix and you can even get some kickback from the steering. In fairness, it's unlikely that many EX5s will ever be driven in a spirited manner and arguably its greatest vice in everyday motoring is the awkward shape of the steering wheel, which makes navigating tight junctions and car parks needlessly annoying.

ASSISTED DRIVING

★☆☆☆☆

PROS Adaptive cruise control works reasonably well
CONS Everything else is awful and difficult to turn off

Euro NCAP awarded the EX5 five stars, scoring it at more than 80% in every category. While the electronic systems worked well in a lab test, however, we found them less effective in the real world.

Driving with the lane keeping assistance left on is quite an unsettling experience, as the systems tug at the steering if you deviate even slightly from the lane's centre line. They seem to actively try to steer you around corners, but then give up halfway through. Go anywhere near a white line and a visual and an audible alarm will go off. Switching all of it off involves going into a sub-menu and pressing 'off' and 'confirm' on three separate functions.

The driver attention monitor will berate you even when you're looking firmly at the road and will nag you constantly if you cover up the sensor. The overspeed warning is typically irritating and inaccurate. Turning these two off again requires you to go into a sub-menu and press 'off' and 'confirm' twice. The adaptive cruise control is at least relatively smooth, but while it's not too susceptible to slowing down for ghosts, it will brake for the faintest curve.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★☆☆

PROS Attractive cash price and purchase incentives
CONS Range; expensive on PCP

Geely wisely isn't aiming to offer a premium experience for a mainstream price. Instead, it's trying to undercut the mainstream players, albeit in a slightly confusing way. There are list prices, but also an EV-grant-matching discount, plus a couple of other incentives. In real terms, the entry-level SE costs £29,690 and Max trim costs £33,240. That's cheaper, though not by very much, than an MG S5 EV, and far less than a Skoda Elroq or Renault Scenic. Geely also throws in a free home charger, and if you trade in a petrol or diesel car, a further £1000 over that car's normal trade-in value.

Its monthly PCP offer isn't so competitive, however, at £100 more than the MG and not that far off a basic Scenic. Of course, one of the Geely's main draws is its generous standard equipment, and to match it you would have to upgrade to a high-spec Scenic.

Like many of the other new Chinese brands, Geely is opting for a traditional dealer model, with 25 locations at its launch and a target of 100 by the end of 2026. Offering further peace of mind is the six-year, 100,000-mile warranty. There's an additional two-year, 25,000-mile warranty, but this excludes a lot of things such as the screen and various sensors. It is also offering four years' free roadside assistance and two years' free maintenance.

In our testing, the EX5 proved less efficient than the Scenic in similar conditions, with its overall range dipping below 200 miles. It also failed to reach its advertised peak rapid- charging speed, topping out at 120kW on several different chargers. Overall, its weighted average charge speed was about the same as the MG S5 EV because the EX5 managed to maintain its charge rate a little better at higher states of charge. ▸

FRONT Leg room 1060mm, head room 1070mm. Despite the high-set seats, there's no shortage of head room. The seats themselves lack support.

REAR Leg room 795mm, head room 970mm. EX5 has more leg room than rivals do and a comfortable angle to the rear bench.

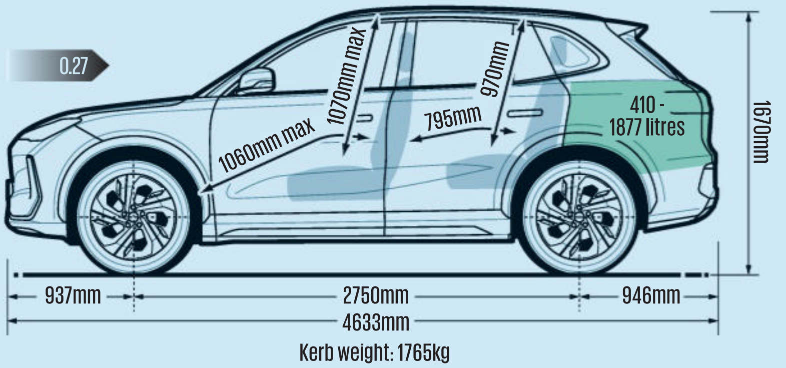
BOOT Length 850-1690mm, width 995-1280mm, height 995-1280mm. Main boot is smaller than rivals', but there is a further 51-litre box under the floor.

"The relaxed demeanour is preferable to forced sportiness"

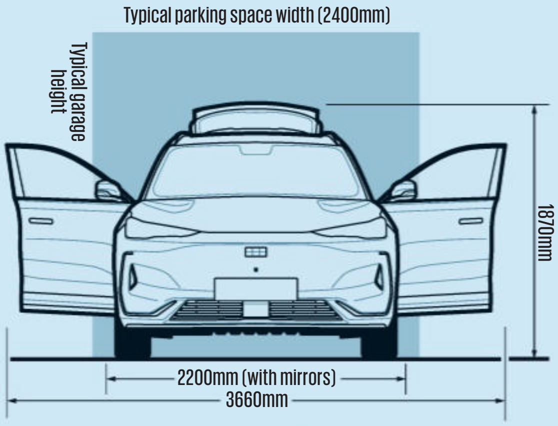
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

Length 4633mm **Width** 2200mm/1901mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1670mm **Door span** 3660mm **Max height to open bootlid** 1870mm

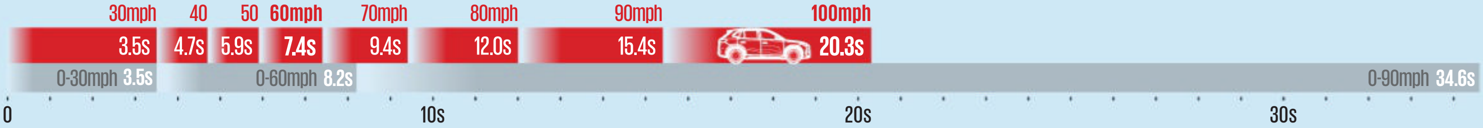

0.27
1060mm max
1070mm max
795mm
970mm
410 - 1877 litres
1670mm
937mm
2750mm
946mm
4633mm
Kerb weight: 1765kg

PARKING

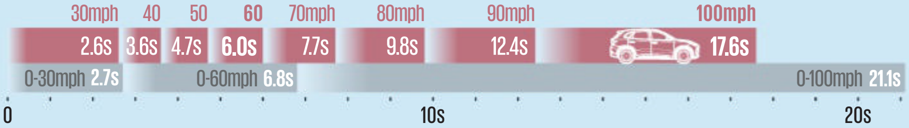

Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
1870mm
2200mm (with mirrors)
3660mm

ACCELERATION

Test conditions 11deg C, damp
Standing quarter mile 16.0sec at 91.3mph **Standing km** 29.0sec at 108mph **30-70mph** 5.9sec **50-80mph** 6.1sec **0-62mph** 7.8sec

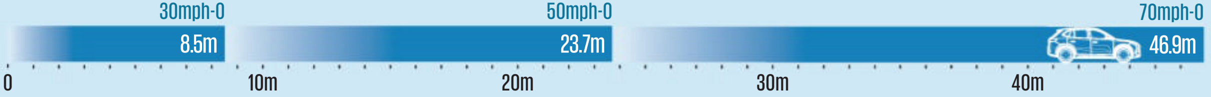


MG S5 EV Long Range Trophy (2025, 26deg C, dry)
Standing quarter mile 14.7sec at 96.3mph **Standing km** 27.9sec at 102.8mph **30-70mph** 5.1sec **50-80mph** 5.2sec **0-62mph** 6.3sec

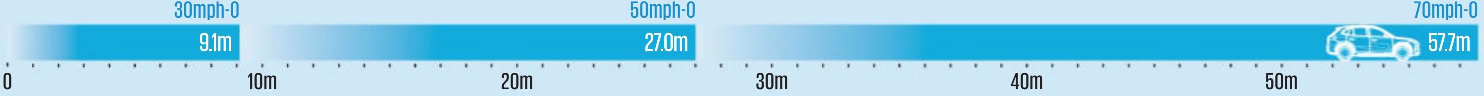


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.56sec

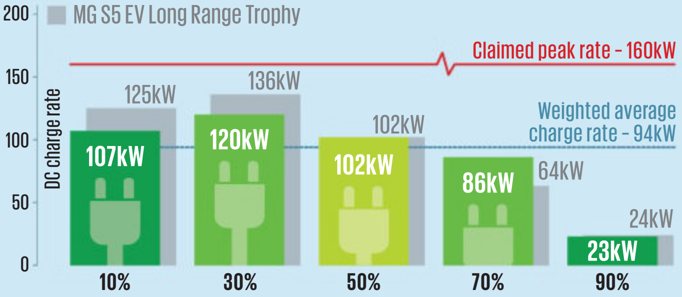


Wet 60-0mph 3.08sec



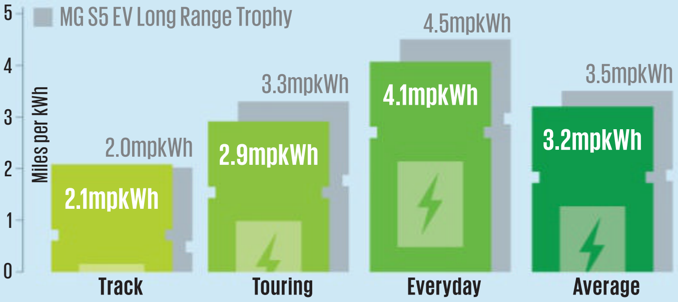
RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

Charging port location Offside front wing **Charger used** Hypercharger HYC_350, 350kW **AC charging** 11kW, three-phase

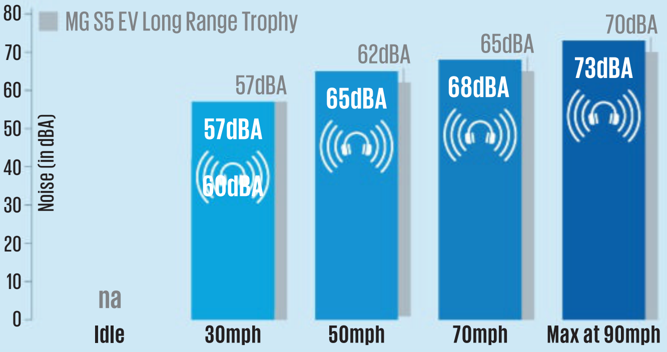


RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 255 miles, 3.7mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 195/175/245 miles (average/touring/everyday)

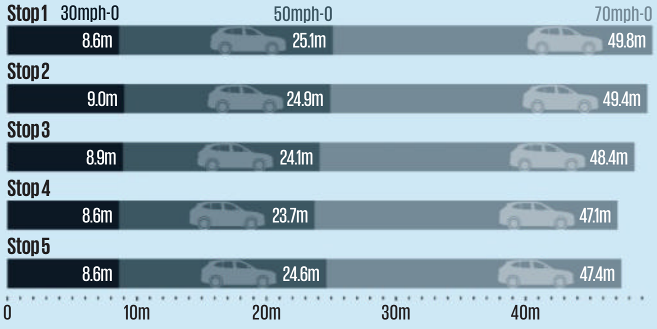


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: -2.4m



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

PETER LIDDIARD

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

GEELY EX5 MAX

On-the-road price £33,240
Price as tested £33,840
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £16,898
Contract hire £422 pcm (£2532 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
Typical PCP £389 pcm (£6000 deposit + 49 months/24,000 miles)
Insurance group 36

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard 19in alloy wheels, panoramic sunroof, power tailgate, keyless entry, heat pump, adaptive cruise control, 15.4in touchscreen, 13.8in head-up display, 16-speaker hi-fi, heated and cooled faux leather seats with electric adjustment and massage function
Optional Moonlight Silver paint £600

MOTOR & BATTERY

Installation Front, transverse, FWD
Type Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 214bhp
Torque 236lb ft
Maximum regen capacity 150kW
Maximum revs 16,500rpm
Battery type LFP
Capacity 61.0/60.2kWh (est total/usable)
Voltage 376V
Power to weight 122bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 134lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel unitary chassis
Weight/as tested 1765kg/na
Drag coefficient 0.27
Wheels 19in
Tyres 235/50 R19 99V, Goodyear EfficientGrip Performance SUV
Spare None (mobility foam)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.5 turns lock to lock; 10.5m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 300mm ventilated discs, two-piston calipers **Rear** 270mm solid discs, single-piston calipers
Handbrake type Electronic, automatic

SAFETY

Euro NCAP rating 5 stars (2025)
Adult occupant 86%, child occupant 87%, vulnerable road users 83%, safety assist 83%

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO_2 0g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £18/£36

VERDICT

Generally acceptable, but mostly mediocre transport

★★☆☆☆

It is appropriate that Geely's logo looks a little like a spreadsheet, because the only reason you might buy an EX5 is if it stacks up on paper. With all of Geely's incentives, it is the cheapest car in its class on list price, but not by enough of a margin to make it particularly recommendable.

Apart from price, there is nothing to mark it out. Its design is as bland as it comes, and the EX5 is at or below the class average in pretty much every way. Most rivals, not least the similarly bargain-priced MG S5, have more interior space, better drivability and a more sophisticated chassis. Few other cars have quite such infuriating ADAS tech.

Geely isn't the first outsider to try to conquer the European market, but given all the local expertise at its fingertips, we expected it to have come up with a stronger first product to make its mark.

TESTERS' NOTES

ILLYA VERPRAET
There are speakers in the headrests of the front seats, and when you get a phone call, it plays only through those. The sound is very tinny, however, and I found it hard to understand what people were saying.

MATT SAUNDERS
As with BYDs, the instrument cluster displays your economy for only the last 100 miles, and you need to go several menus deep into the touchscreen to find an overall figure that can be reset.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Drastically improve the control layout and ADAS features.
- Inject at least a little character.
- Make the bigger battery available.

RANKING RIVALS

1

2

3

4

5

	RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH TECHNO	**MG S5 EV LONG RANGE TROPHY**	**KIA EV3 58.3KWH AIR**	**SKODA ELROQ 60 EDITION**	**VAUXHALL GRANDLAND ELECTRIC DESIGN**
	Long-range, inviting French option is good value, particularly on monthly finance.	Shows up the EX5 by being better in every way for about the same money. Could do with more range.	Kia packs a lot of space and sophistication in a smaller car. A bit pricey on finance.	Unbeatable mix of space, quality, comfort and ease of use, but our preferred 85 version is pricey.	Does unremarkable, practical family transport well, if not particularly cheaply.
	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★½☆
Price	£35,495	£33,745	£33,005	£34,460	£36,055
Power, torque	215bhp, 221lb ft	228bhp, 258lb ft	201bhp, 209lb ft	201bhp, 229lb ft	210bhp, 254lb ft
0-62mph, top speed	7.9sec, 105mph	6.3sec, 103mph	7.5sec, 105mph	8.0sec, 99mph	9.0sec, 105mph
Range, economy	367 miles, 4.1mpkWh	288 miles, 3.8mpkWh	270 miles, 4.6mpkWh	266 miles, 3.9mpkWh	322 miles, 3.7mpkWh

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5788**

VOLVO EX90

Is electric sibling of seven-seat XC90 flagship a worthy new torchbearer?

As you might have read in our news pages recently (Autocar, 1 October), the Volvo EX90 is in line for some key upgrades in 2026. Principally, an 800V electrical architecture delivering faster charging and better efficiency.

It's an unusual situation for a car that's only been in the hands of UK owners for about a year and that, not so long ago, looked like a totem of Volvo's bold electric future.

After a delayed start at its US production base in Ridgeville, South Carolina, the car's commercial success has yet to really take off on our side of the pond. Year-to-date UK registrations for 2025 make it less than half as popular as the related Polestar 3 and a fifth as successful as the BMW iX.

Nevertheless, the EX90's status at the top of Volvo's UK model range is not in any doubt. This is our first chance to fully road test any version of the car, and to take Autocar's usual closely scrutinised, carefully considered view on it, which we're basing on a Twin Motor Ultra model.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★☆

PROS Smart, clean, familiar design; plenty of choice in terms of motors and layout

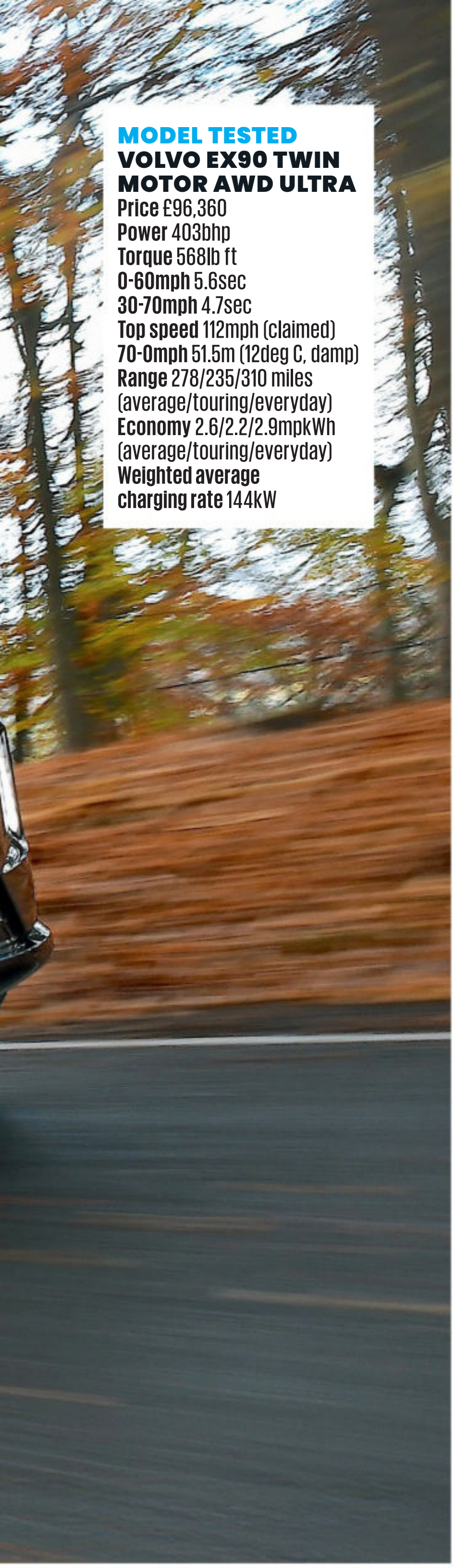
CONS Heavier than key rivals

The EX90 is the electric sister car of Volvo's seven-seat flagship SUV: the XC90. It is about 90mm longer than the XC90, putting it at a little over five metres at the kerb. Unlike many EVs that strike out into clear white space in design terms, this one was always clearly intended to modernise rather than reinvent its predecessor's image, which it does rather well.

It is the first Volvo to adopt the firm's EV-specific SPA2 model platform. That means it has a unitary chassis made predominantly of high-strength steel; an underfloor drive battery that extends to 100kWh or 107kWh of usable capacity, depending on derivative; and a choice of one or two permanent magnet synchronous motors.

The cheaper, 275bhp, single-motor model is driven by its rear axle, whereas the twin-motor model is driven primarily by its front motor. That car uses a clutch-based electronic rear differential to disconnect the rear motor from the wheels to boost efficiency during cruising, or to vector torque asymmetrically across the rear axle at other times.

If you go for the standard 403bhp Twin Motor Ultra model – tested here – that rear motor is less powerful than the one at the front. Go for the 510bhp Twin Motor Performance model instead and it's the rear motor that becomes the more powerful of the two. The 2026-model-year car will

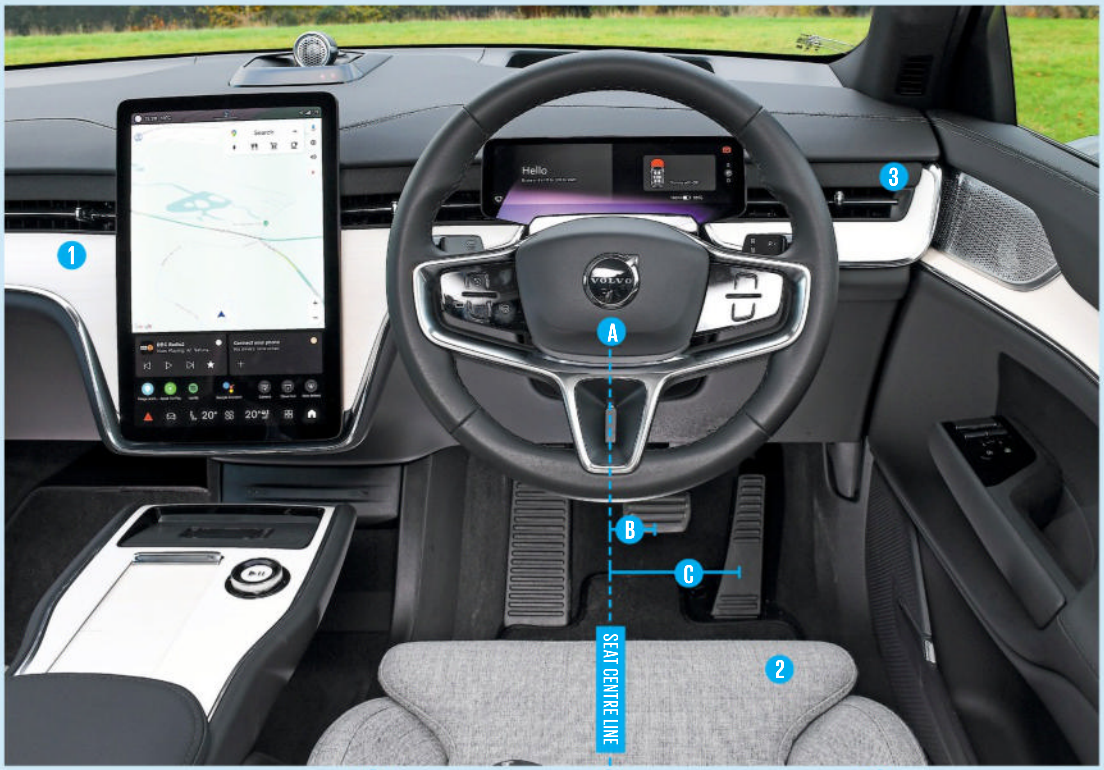


MODEL TESTED
VOLVO EX90 TWIN MOTOR AWD ULTRA
Price £96,360
Power 403bhp
Torque 568lb ft
0-60mph 5.6sec
30-70mph 4.7sec
Top speed 112mph (claimed)
70-0mph 51.5m (12deg C, damp)
Range 278/235/310 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 2.6/2.2/2.9mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 144kW

① The EX90 offers genuine wood veneers: this light ash, or a darker birch with Nordico synthetic leather. Gentle ambient backlight glows invitingly after dark.

② Seats adjust widely, though you have to dive into yet another menu on the touchscreen to do the job easily. The cushion extension is the only manually adjusted part.

③ Air vents are neat and classy-looking, with physical adjustment knobs that make it easy to direct the flow of air without needing to wrestle with the touchscreen.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 50mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 180mm right. Pedals are of a good size and well placed. Column adjusts electrically, via the touchscreen.

bring slightly lower-capacity – but lighter – battery packs, and more powerful motors.

As it was, our car weighed a hefty 2770kg on the proving ground scales: more than 130kg heavier than the BMW iX xDrive60 we tested earlier this year (which had greater usable battery capacity).

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Lots of space; easy passenger access; relaxed ambience underlaid by quality feel

CONS Missing some key physical secondary controls

The EX90's interior is one of self-assured, lounge-like comfort and substantial tactile quality. It isn't preoccupied with 'wow' factor. From its widely adjustable comfortable woollen seats, to its showpiece switchgear and useful storage, this is an enveloping, relaxing interior to be appreciated in the normal course of everyday life.

Unlike in the EX30, the driver finds both a decent-sized digital instrument panel and a head-up display ahead. The driving position is straight, and adjustable enough to feel either high and commanding or lower and more couched. Look around, though, and you will notice how many secondary physical controls (steering column adjusters, mirror controls etc) have been substituted by touchscreen controls.

The centre console offers cleverly conceived storage. The armrest cubby has a false floor with a rubber-matted 'secret compartment' underneath the main one, while an elastic retention strap stops smaller bags from rolling out of the lower-console storage area.

In the second row, Volvo's woollen-blend upholstery continues the rich, informal vibe. Each of the three chairs here slides forwards and backwards individually by 140mm, and can recline by about 10deg. The outer ones have a particularly handy, one-touch fold function, and a separate forwards-tilt mechanism that makes access into row three easier than in most similar-size seven-seaters.

According to our tape measure, the car is only 10mm behind a BMW iX for outright second-row leg room when the seats are set at their rearmost. In the third row, space is tighter, but there is a little more for knees and feet than some seven-seat SUVs offer; we measured 20mm less leg room in the latest XC90. Even so, only small adults could travel back here happily. A Kia EV9's back row is probably marginally more adult-appropriate.

The big boot has useful bits like hooks, straps and lights. The 570mm of loading length left when the third-row seats are in place is impressive enough itself (Hyundai Santa Fe: 380mm), but equally creditable is the depth of the available space, and its freedom from intrusion by the packaging of the rear drive motor.

MULTIMEDIA

★★★½☆

PROS More feature-rich and usable than it was

CONS Still has too many 'list all' sub-menus, and too broad a brief

Volvo's latest touchscreen multimedia systems have drawn criticism from Autocar's testers over the past couple of years. This EX90 shows they are certainly improving in some respects.

Our test car's set-up offered integrated Google app functionality and reliable Apple CarPlay device mirroring, and it made the latter ▶

■ This pod, hiding the forward-facing lidar sensors, is an uncharacteristically clumsy part of the design, giving a London taxi vibe. Mercifully, the 2026 model doesn't have it.

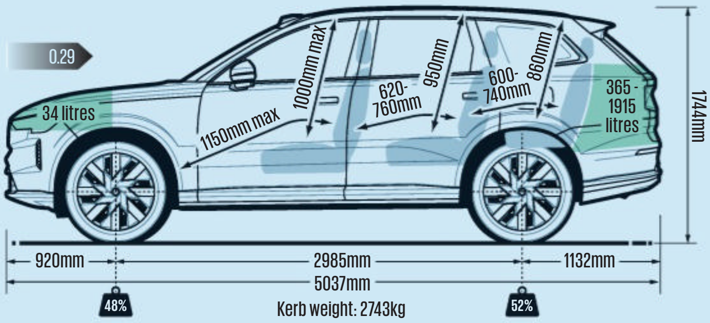
■ The 22in wheels have plastic clip-on aero covers to cut down on drag. It seems rather odd that Volvo didn't include centre caps underneath to let owners decide which option looks best.

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW

TEST RESULTS

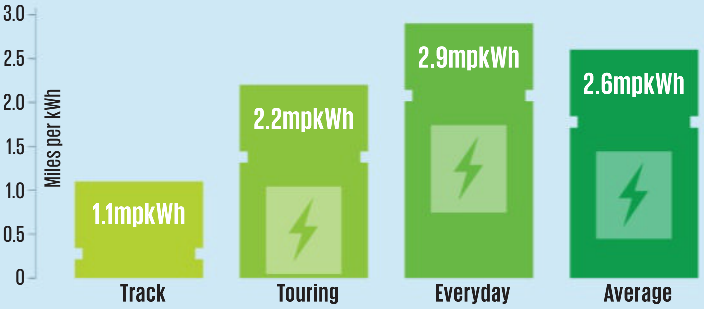
DIMENSIONS

Length 5037mm **Width** 2110mm/1964mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1744mm **Door span** 3760mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2150mm



RUNNING EFFICIENCY

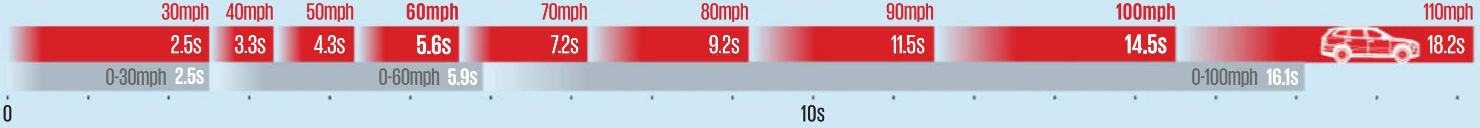
WLTP 372 miles, 2.9mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 278/235/310 miles (average/touring/everyday)



ACCELERATION

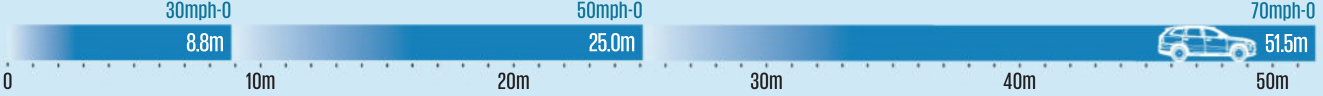
Test conditions 12deg C, damp/light rain

Standing quarter mile 14.3sec at 99.6mph **Standing km** 26.3sec at 115.1mph **30-70mph** 4.7sec **50-80mph** 4.9sec **0-62mph** 5.9sec

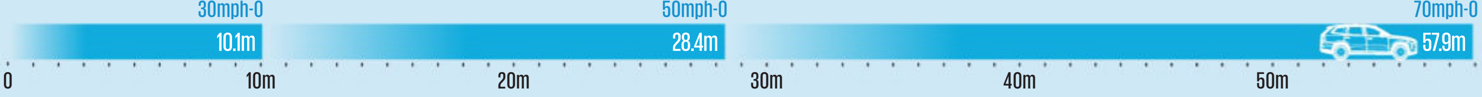


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.68sec



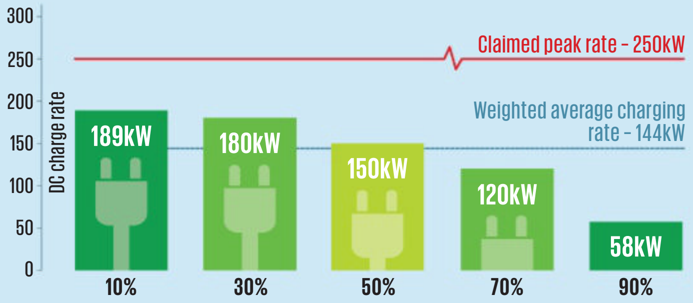
Wet 60-0mph 3.04sec



RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

Charging port location Nearside rear wing

Charger used ABB HP CP500C, Gridserve, 350kW **AC charging** 11kW



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

VOLVO EX90 TWIN MOTOR AWD ULTRA

On-the-road price £96,360
Price as tested £96,360
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £49,948
Insurance group 50

MOTORS & BATTERY

Installation Front and rear, transverse, 4WD **Type** Two permanent magnet synchronous motors; 242bhp and 310lb ft (f), 161bhp and 258lb ft (r) **Power** 403bhp **Torque** 568lb ft **Battery** 111/107kWh (total/usable), NMC **Power to weight** 147bhp per tonne **Torque to weight** 207lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear **mph per 1000rpm** 10.2

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel and aluminium, unitary chassis **Weight/as tested** 2743kg/2770kg **Wheels** 9.5Jx22in (f), 10.5Jx22in (r) **Tyres** 265/40 R22 106H (f), 295/35 R22 108H (r), Pirelli Scorpion Elect

SUSPENSION, STEERING & BRAKES

Front Double wishbones, air springs, anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link, air springs, anti-roll bar **Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 3.0 turns lock to lock; 12.2m turning circle **Brakes** 400mm ventilated discs, four-piston calipers (f), 390mm ventilated discs, floating calipers (r)

"Its abiding dynamic traits suit a big Volvo very well"

PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

◂ easy to transfer in and out of via the 'contextual' nav bar in the bottom left corner of the screen, which also gave useful access to other frequently used menus. It would be better still if you could customise the whole of this nav bar directly, rather than relying on the AI to manage only half of it – and yet it works well enough.

There are still plenty of usability failings for Volvo to work out. Since you can only adjust the door mirrors via the screen, the process of reversing through a tight garage door opening, for example, is maddeningly complicated for something you should be able to achieve by pressing one button. First you must stop to go into neutral in order to cancel the reversing camera display, then you need to find the button several menus deep to fold the mirrors in, and then you have to do it all over again 20 seconds later when you need to fold them back out again.

DRIVING CHARACTERISTICS

★★★★☆

PROS Ample, assured outright performance; easy drivability; excellent refinement

CONS Out-of-town body control gets a bit soft and lolloping

The EX90's driving experience has great comfort and refinement; simple drivability; relaxed yet ample, assertive power; and quite respectable manoeuvrability and handling for something of its size.

These abiding dynamic traits suit a big Volvo very well. It doesn't hurry into motion, even on a floored accelerator. And yet our test car still managed to dip well below six seconds to 60mph, and went under 5sec from 30-70mph and 50-80mph. In all three respects, you wouldn't say something this big and heavy had any business being quicker.

Cabin isolation is hushed, even on 22in wheels. The 57dBA in-car noise level our car recorded at 50mph, and on a slightly damp but still day, actually narrowly beat that set by the BMW iX this year and trounced that of the Kia EV9 (63dBA).

For brake regen, you choose via the touchscreen from a full-coasting regen-off mode, wherein all energy regen is fed in on the brake pedal; a 'one-pedal' mode with lots of trailing-throttle regen; and an auto mode, which blends regen up and down as the traffic situation ahead dictates. The auto mode works fairly well, but most testers preferred fully off and didn't struggle to drive smoothly via the soft but progressive brake pedal.

There are soft and firm modes for both steering and suspension if you venture far enough into the multimedia menus to find them. The suspension configurability is worth seeking out, although a third 'normal' setting is what's conspicuously missing. The car does heave and pitch noticeably in 'soft', and struggles a little for country-road composure. It feels tauter, if slightly brittle-riding, in 'firm'. An off-road mode provides boosted ground clearance via the air suspension, but annoyingly automatically deactivates without warning if you accelerate above 25mph, which could catch you out in rougher terrain.

The car's ADAS functions are averagely intrusive but mostly easy to deactivate on the 'quick controls' menu. The exception is the driver monitoring system, which is quick to castigate you for briefly looking at the big, distracting multimedia screen – which, at times, you can't help doing.

One system worthy of praise is the speed limit governance, which has a mode that helps you keep to the posted limit not by beeping constantly but instead simply deadening the accelerator pedal at the crucial moment. You can easily override it with an extra flex of your toe, but it's discreet and effective, and once you select it, the system remains as you left it.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★☆☆

PROS Not as expensive as some big, premium-brand EVs

CONS Range and charging speed aren't worth a premium billing

The EX90 was introduced to the UK at the end of 2024, and initially you could only get twin-motor versions in upper-trim levels. While single-motor and lower-tier models have been added since, none has been offered for less than £80,000 – with the priciest, Twin Motor Performance versions extending well into six figures.

Compared with premium rivals such as the BMW iX and Mercedes-Benz EQS SUV, those aren't outlandish prices. But with the likes of the Kia EV9 and Hyundai Ioniq 9 available for a good 25% less – and competitive in so many respects – they probably aren't helping to convince people in what remains broadly an EV-sceptical market.

The EX90's range and charging speeds won't help much in those respects, either, which may explain why Volvo has addressed them so quickly. Our car's weighted average DC rapid-charging test result was only 144kW (Kia EV9: 170kW, Porsche Macan Turbo Electric: 197kW), while its 235-mile touring test range also trailed key rivals.

VERDICT

Made of the right stuff. Needs improved range and charging to justify its price

★★★½☆

The EX90 has so far been something of a work in progress. We're now more convinced than we were that it's on course to become a worthy flagship EV, but it's clearly got some distance to make up.

The car's strengths are well chosen. It's refined and comfortable, very pleasant, habitable and versatile, and easy to drive at a fundamental level.

Volvo has made notable improvements to the digital technology, but it can still frustrate. Moreover, neither range nor charging speed is where it ought to be on a £100k EV. It remains to be seen if the 2026-model-year EX90 resolves those issues.

RIVALS

BMW iX xDRIVE60
From £93,205
★★★★½

KIA EV9 AWD
From £76,985
★★★★☆

HYUNDAI IONIQ 9 LONG RANGE AWD
From £71,995
★★★★☆

4 **VOLVO EX90**

AUTOCAR PODCAST

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

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ILLYA VERPRAET

Testing, testing

Car makers would do well to replicate this Skoda's steering

Modern car steering is a very complex dance between shafts and cogs, software, suspension geometry and flexing tyres. But you would hope that operating it should be simple, as subconscious as breathing: turn the wheel clockwise to go right, turn it twice as much to turn twice as sharply.

Same with the accelerator pedal. Particularly with electric motors having a flat torque curve in most everyday speed ranges, you might expect that putting the pedal to the floor gives you full power and holding it at half its travel gives you half the available power.

Not always: in the Hyundai Inster that I drove a while back, three-quarters throttle equated to full power, according to the on-screen graphic. Which begs the question what the remaining 25% of travel is for. Moral support during a particularly ambitious overtaking manoeuvre?

Inster's throttle pedal has a nasty surprise in store

> **"So what is the last 25% of pedal travel for? Moral support?"**

The Inster (which I found a charming thing otherwise) is far from the only offender. Sport, let alone Sport Plus mode (or similar) for the powertrain of any given car, whether electric or combustion-engined, is generally to be avoided, because it tends to map 80% of the power onto the first third of the pedal travel.

Presumably this is done to make the car feel faster than it is – initially, at least. Given how many manufacturers are guilty of such tricks, there must be some research somewhere that says customers love it. Heck, even the Ferrari 12Cilindri gets jumpier as you dial up the spicier modes. Wanting a rear-driven, 819bhp, 0-62mph-in-2.9sec car to feel faster than it is seems psychopathic to me, but there we go.

I try to drive smoothly even when I'm alone in the car. It's so refreshing to drive an old BMW M car or a current Ford Mustang and find a loooong-travel accelerator that is 100% functional. I've never driven a TVR, but I'm told they effectively used long throttle pedals as DIY traction control, which may be taking things in a slightly sinister direction.

Where accelerator linearity is sometimes a setting in a menu that the driver can adjust, steering tends to be baked in, and it's remarkable how many ordinary cars have excessively darty steering off-centre. Renaults are particularly bad for this. The 5, Scenic and Megane all have steering that isn't unusually quick overall – 2.5 turns or so between locks – but makes flowing smoothly down a B-road needlessly difficult.

I can see the purpose of variable-ratio steering that gets quicker as you turn the wheel, because this makes it calm around the dead-ahead but requires less wheel-twirling when parking. But what's happening on Renaults, and indeed quite a few Audis and BMWs, is surely the opposite of how it should be done.

There are cars that show there's no need for this superficial hyperactivity. The new Honda Prelude's steering is just two turns lock to lock, yet it's progressive and full of feel – some of the best steering I've experienced in a mainstream new car.

Presumably all of this is done so that cars instantly feel 'sporty' to prospective customers taking a test drive around a suburban block. The ludicrous power outputs of some EVs fit into this picture: you try it once and scare yourself silly, then just use it for bragging rights.

If this is what's needed to sell cars today, I won't say it's wrong. But I am convinced that there's a better way. When you drive a car with carefully tuned controls (the Mercedes-Benz CLA EQ, Skoda Superb diesel and Volvo EX90 spring to mind), it just feels right; it feels relaxing. It can be hard to put your finger on why, but the effect is unmistakable.

Can't we all use a bit of calm in our lives? It must be possible to make that into just as much of a selling point as 0-62mph in 3.0sec.

STARLIGHT EXPRESS

Glitzy electric Mercedes CLA aims to railroad the updated Tesla and upmarket MG. **JAMES DISDALE** jumps aboard

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW

KN75 GUC

Just two weeks ago in these pages, deputy road tester Richard Lane celebrated a half century of the BMW 3 Series, the once undisputed king of the compact executive class. But while he sang the praises of the sharp-suited and quick-witted saloon that almost single-handedly hooked British buyers on their premium brand habit, he sounded an alarm that time could be up for this evergreen class leader, as the future of the 3 Series now hangs in the balance.

Why? The compact exec has always been the first choice of company car drivers looking to cut a dash, but the tax-slashing benefits of going electric mean that corporate tastes have changed. Three still remains the magic number, but for BMW now read Tesla.

The Model 3 has become the user-chooser's first choice, its blend of tech, range, fast charging and rock-bottom tax bills making it a perennial sales chart fixture since it arrived here in 2018. Moreover, it has been joined in the past year or so by a growing number of upstart EV rivals keen to take a slice of this profitable pie.

One of the latest to land is the MG IM5, which actually isn't an MG at all. (You will search in vain for any sign of an octagonal Morris Garages logo.) Instead, it's a rebadged Intelligence in Motion L6, a slick executive saloon that's the product of a joint venture with MG owner SAIC. No matter what it's called, it's hard to ignore the car's sleek lines, massive 100kWh battery, 441-mile range and £44,995 price, plus a tech spec that runs to four-wheel steer and 800V architecture.

The old guard aren't giving up without a fight, though. Like many European brands, Mercedes-Benz has been hampered by legislative flip-flopping and shackled by the need to deliver both battery-powered and combustion-engined models, often offering two totally bespoke machines in effectively the same class (the E-Class and EQE, for example).

With the new CLA, however, it's taking a more joined-up approach. The first car to be built on the brand's new MMA architecture, it's engineered to seamlessly accept any powertrain. For this CLA 250+, that means a highly efficient 85kWh nickel-manganese-cobalt battery and a clever, rear-mounted 268bhp motor with a silicon-carbide inverter that offers lower weight and a more compact size.

There's also a Porsche Taycan-style two-speed transmission and 800V architecture for an ability to charge at 320kW (behind the MG's 396kW but ahead of the Tesla's 250kW). Oh, and a not insignificant claimed range of 484 miles, which

Decent calibration means the driver aids on our trio aren't that intrusive. However, the Merc's and the Tesla's are the easiest to disable on the fly.

CLA's infotainment is slick and the cabin looks the most showy

IM5 scores with soft-touch materials and assured build quality

“The Mercedes looks the most conventional. It’s also the slipperiest, with a Cd of 0.21”

is enough to calm the nerves of even the most anxious long-distance traveller.

Alive to the dangers of this challenge to its supremacy, Tesla has revised the Model 3 with an upgraded battery (it’s the same size, but software tweaks have made it more efficient) and, praise be, the addition of an indicator stalk, which was bizarrely deleted when the new model was launched just under two years ago. The Single Motor Long Range version we requested for this test can now travel up to 466 miles between charges. The more expensive and powerful Dual Motor that actually turned up at our offices offers a still impressive 410 miles.

Despite being the newest model here, the Merc looks the most conventional, with its vast three-pointed-star-emblazoned ‘radiator’ and a slinky silhouette that owes a lot to its predecessor. It’s also the slipperiest, cleaving through the air with a Cd of just 0.21. Meanwhile, the sweeping and strobing light show put on by its LED-encrusted grille when unlocking the car prompted one young passer-by to declare it “low-key sick”. Praise does not come much higher, apparently.

What the MG lacks in eye-dazzling illuminations it makes up for in sheer presence. At 4931mm long, the IM5 is actually closer in size to cars from the class above, such as the BMW i5. It’s not exactly distinctive, but the curvaceous and low-slung Chinese saloon does just enough to claim premium credentials.

And the Tesla? The slimmer lights, introduced as part of the ‘Highland’ update, have kept the Model 3 looking fresh, but such is the car’s ubiquity that it fails to get a look-in alongside its newer rivals. That said, the old-stager manages to turn the tables on its rivals when it comes to interior style. Tesla’s minimalist design ethos and large glasshouse – it’s the only one with a true panoramic roof, the glass stretching from the top of the windscreen to the base of the rear window – create a bright and airy feel, while the quality and fit and finish of the materials finally match Tesla’s premium aspirations. As ever, the dashboard is dominated by the large touchscreen, which is the easiest to operate here, with crisp responses and logical menus. And did we mention there’s now an indicator stalk?

As with its exterior, the Merc’s cabin is the most showy, particularly in our test car’s garish black and white finish, complete with ambient lighting seemingly lifted from a Stuttgart nightclub. The slab-fronted dash looks a little tacked on and the glossy black finish isn’t as upmarket as the brand imagines, but the infotainment almost matches Tesla for slick operation and there are even some physical buttons.

Sitting between these two is the MG, which on first impressions certainly looks and feels the part. Soft-touch materials are everywhere ▸

Tesla feels bright and airy; touchscreen is the most intuitive to use

IM5 wears no trad MG badges; latest Model 3 gains slim lighting

◂ and build quality is easily on a par with its rivals here. Yet it's all a little generic and the impressive-looking touchscreens are fiddly to use (even simple operations keep your eyes off the road long enough for the driver distraction warning to squawk at you), as are the unmarked steering wheel-mounted rollers.

Perhaps most surprising, given its imposing external dimensions, the MG feels a little cramped inside. Those in the rear get no more space than in the more compact CLA, and neither can quite match the roomier Model 3 for occupant accommodation. The IM5 hits back with a more practical hatchback opening for the luggage area, but all three provide around 500 litres of carrying capacity (the Tesla closer to 700), if you take into account overspill space in the various frunks.

So much for practicality. It's time to drive. First up is the MG and initial reactions are positive. You sit nice and low in the car while, with 402bhp on tap, performance is quick, almost matching the dual-motor Model 3 for instant, horizon-reeling urge. At 2210kg, it is the heaviest here but will still fire from standstill to 62mph in 4.9sec. Sport mode adds some extra zest to the throttle mapping, even if it offers no more actual pace.

Of more concern is the lack of traction, on the wet and greasy roads of our test route at least. Squeeze the throttle with intent and the MG's rear end can slip and slide briefly before the traction control abruptly and scrappily gets a handle on the situation. Incredibly you can actually partially disengage the safety net, which results in enough tyre smoke to impress a Santa Pod season ticket holder.

Obviously there are no such issues with the all-wheel-drive, dual-motor Tesla, which takes the drag strip spoils here. Combining a remarkably low 1840kg mass with 394bhp, it will zip to 62mph in just 4.2sec. Yet our experience of the 315bhp Single Motor version suggests that choosing the cheaper model won't leave you feeling less exhilarated as it matches the MG, to the tenth, in the benchmark sprint.

What's more remarkable is that it combines this turn of speed with an incredibly modest appetite for electricity. We managed an impressive 4.0mpkWh during our hard-driven time with the car and the two-wheel-drive version will be more parsimonious still. The lower-powered Merc came closest to matching it, with 3.9mpkWh. The MG trailed both by a significant margin, with 3.0mpkWh.

Given its relatively lowly 268bhp and a kerb weight of 1980kg, it's no shock to discover the Mercedes is the least swift of our three, requiring nearly two seconds longer than the IM5 to rush to 62mph. Yet, as with all EVs, the CLA's instant low-speed response means it feels faster than the numbers suggest, and the jolt you get as the transmission shifts between its two gears adds a little drama to proceedings.

However, knockout performance is part and parcel of the EV experience these days. Of more importance for any car wanting to rise above its rivals in the compact exec class is the ability to match its pace to a carefully balanced blend of handling elan and soothing comfort.

With its four-wheel steering, the IM5 has a neat technical trick up its sleeve to try to offset its extra mass and length. This lends the car remarkable agility around town, where it feels as wieldy as the smaller CLA. It also gives the MG a heightened sense of tippy-toed agility when the roads get faster because little steering input is required for it to slice cleanly through corners with nicely neutral composure.

There's decent weighting to the steering too, while the body stays incredibly level and grip levels in the dry are high. In the wet, that lack of traction means you need to be wary, even with ▸

This style of seat adjuster is a Merc hallmark

CLA offers similar rear space to the larger IM5

No danger of overlooking who made this car

"The IM5 almost matches the dual-motor Model 3 for instant, horizon-reeling urge"

CLA 250+ starts at £45,615, the Single Motor Long Range Model 3 at £44,950 and the IM5 Long Range at £44,995.

Merc is slowest here but averaged 3.9mpkWh on test

SAME MONEY BUT USED

If you're buying with your own cash rather than company coffers, then for the same price as our box-fresh execs, you could upgrade to some seriously tasty second-hand EV bargains.

PORSCHE TAYCAN 4S PERFORMANCE PLUS

2020/22, 32k miles, £46,989

The Taycan has experienced a dramatic price-related fall from grace, with the value of used examples of the pioneering electric Porsche tumbling. Despite that, it remains one of the most involving and exhilarating EVs out there, with sublime steering, incredibly poised handling and an interior that oozes upmarket appeal. It's a great time to add one to your driveway.

BMW iX XDRIVE50 M SPORT

2023/23, 24k miles, £46,990

If you want more of an SUV flavour from your classy high-performance electric family car, then may we suggest the iX? Look past the challenging design and you'll find a vast and richly finished interior, plus a driving experience that's sharper and more engaging than the BMW's bulky size would lead you to believe.

MERCEDES-BENZ EQS 450+ AMG LINE

2022/22, 13k miles, £45,500

If you want to match the long-striding range of our test trio, the flagship electric Benz is just the ticket. With a mammoth, 108kWh battery, the 450+ has a claimed 441 miles of range, each one of them covered in the lap of luxury. Better still, at this price, you will have the pick of low-mileage examples.

◂ the safety systems engaged. Yet while it's precise and fairly well composed, the MG fails to engage or entertain, simply going where you point it with clinical efficiency. It's effective and accurate, but fairly humourless.

On the plus side, it's extremely relaxing at a cruise, with low noise levels and, over smoothly surfaced roads, an effortlessly languid gait. On more torn Tarmac, however, the car starts to feel a little unsettled and jittery. The adaptive dampers and air springs from the larger IM6 wouldn't go amiss here.

By contrast, the CLA has a firmer ride but its greater damping control means it nicely rounds off the sharper edges of nastier surface imperfections. It's equally quiet too. That wind-cheating shape allows it to slip effortlessly through the air, while road and suspension intrusions are kept to a minimum.

So it comes as a surprise that the mollifying Merc is up for a laugh when you're in the mood for something more energetic. The steering is the lightest here, even in Sport mode, and it has the slowest-paced rack, but tip the CLA into a corner and you will find taut body control and a front end that bites convincingly while the rest of the car pivots pleasingly around your hips.

More impressively, careful calibration of the motor's mapping means that you can even tighten your line using the throttle. With the ESP disengaged, the CLA will actually indulge in a little gigglesome power oversteer. There's genuine fun to be had here.

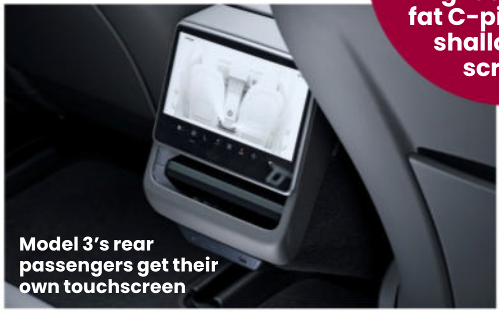
Sitting somewhere between the Mercedes and the MG is the Tesla. The double-wishbone set-up is still on the firm side, but it's never anything other than comfortable and the well-judged matching of control weights makes the Model 3 easy to rub along with from the moment you slide behind the wheel.

> *"The Model 3 has keen turn-in, impressive resistance to roll and a willingness to alter direction"*

1ST The current Model 3 remains Tesla's most mature offering, with a compelling blend of talents and strong practicality. It's also attractively priced now.

Driver monitoring in the IM5 leaves a little to be desired

IM5's cameras cover almost every blindspot imaginable. Good thing too, given the fat C-pillars and shallow rear screen.



Model 3's rear passengers get their own touchscreen

CLA's central screen is relatively easy to use on the move

The standard two-wheel-drive car feels slightly sweeter and fleeter of foot, but this dual-motor model shares the same keen turn-in, impressive resistance to roll and an almost mid-engined willingness to change direction. It's not quite as expressive as the Mercedes, but the Tesla gives you options to subtly trim your line mid-corner.

Regardless of the version, you still can't change its one-pedal regenerative braking but it's the most natural-feeling here. By contrast, in its most aggressive setting the CLA's retardation is so severe as to be unpleasant and near enough unusable. The Model 3 also has the best brake feel here, with a firm and positive action. The MG's stoppers can be a little grabby, the Merc's pedal a little squishy.

So, another win for Tesla? Well, yes, but it's certainly close. In its current form, the Model 3 remains one of the best electric all-rounders in the business, and that's before you take into account its remarkable efficiency, eye-catching pricing and 0% finance deals.

Yet the Mercedes pretty much matches the Tesla for trailblazing EV tech while also offering a little more dynamic polish and even greater driver engagement. Only in outright urge does the CLA trail the Model 3, plus it costs a little more. But if you were to choose it over the Tesla, we would completely understand.

That leaves the IM5 in third place, but you should be in no doubt that the Chinese newcomer already has the raw ingredients to make life difficult for legacy brands, which now have to include Tesla among their number. For what is effectively a first attempt to topple the compact executive elite, this is a seriously impressive effort.

Factor in the rate of improvement already shown by companies like MG and established operators should be worrying that their 3 Series moment might not be far away. **A**

	TESLA MODEL 3 DUAL MOTOR LONG RANGE	MERCEDES CLA 250+ EQ AMG LINE PREMIUM EDITION	MG IM5 100 LONG RANGE
Rating	★★★★½	★★★★½	★★★½☆
Price	£49,990	£51,770	£44,995
Engine	Asynchronous motor (f), permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)	Permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)	Permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)
Power	394bhp (est)	268bhp	402bhp
Torque	377lb ft (est)	247lb ft	368lb ft
Gearbox	1-spd reduction gear, 4WD	2-spd reduction gear, RWD	1-spd reduction gear, RWD
Kerb weight	1840kg	1980kg	2210kg
0-62mph	4.2sec	6.7sec	4.9sec
Top speed	125mph (est)	130mph	136mph
Battery	82kWh (est usable), nickel manganese cobalt	85kWh (usable), nickel manganese cobalt	96.5kWh (usable), nickel manganese cobalt
Range (claimed)	410 miles	484 miles	441 miles
Economy (tested)	4.0mpkWh	3.9mpkWh	3.0mpkWh

KN75 GUC
LG25 PED

2ND Good to drive, packed with kerb appeal and promising impressive efficiency, the CLA shows that the old guard isn't ready to throw in the towel just yet.

3RD The big MG is comfortable, quick and competent, plus it's bursting with tech. But there are some dynamic rough edges and it lacks character.

IM5 is quick but traction in the wet can be an issue

KN75 GUC
HJ75 PWX

Tesla and Merc are the better choices for driver rewards

Now for the encore

Audi has conquered virtually every type of motorsport you can name – but none is trickier than Formula 1. **CHARLIE MARTIN** discovers how it plans to rise to the very top

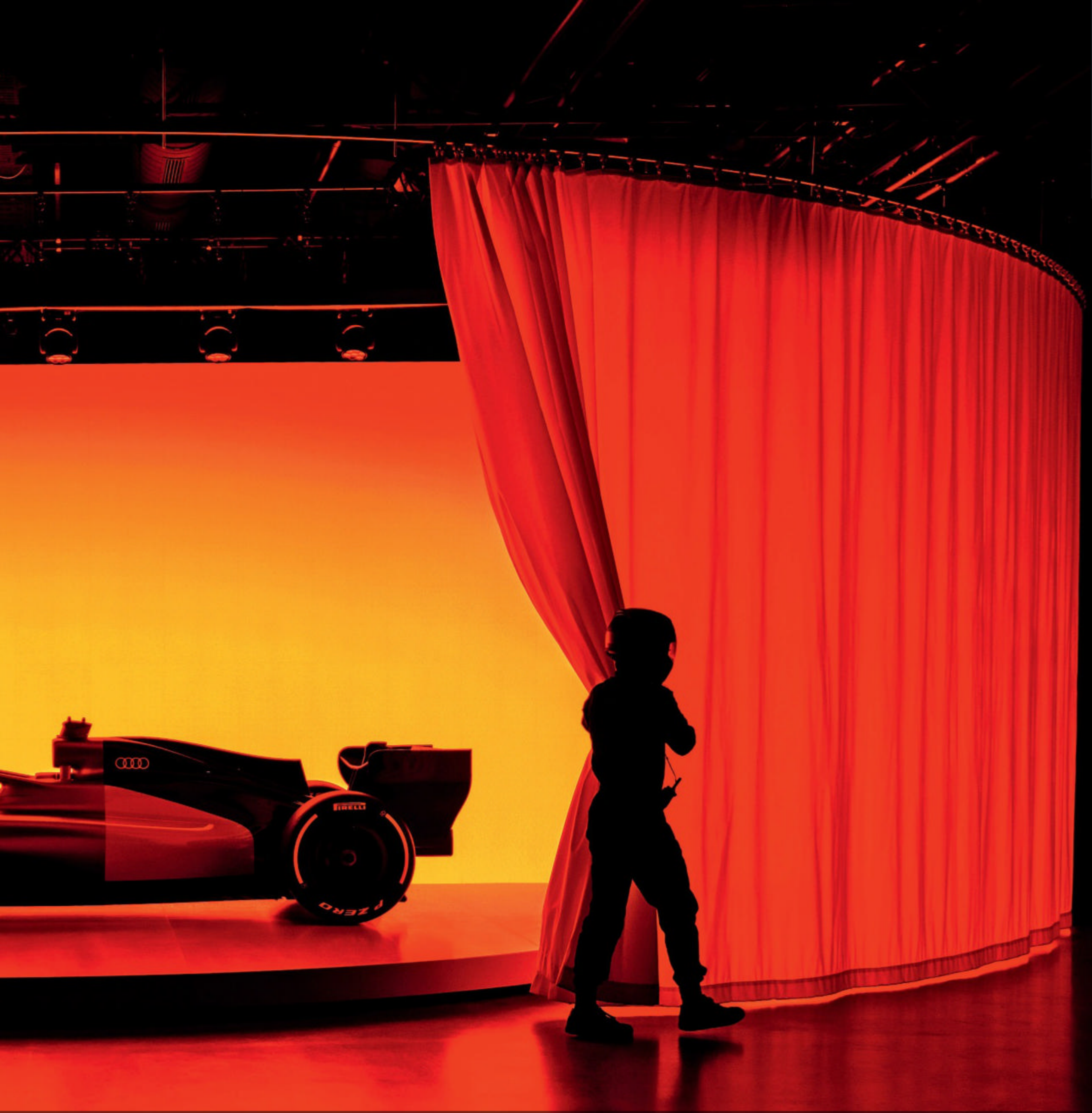
One hundred and fifteen days, nine hours, 15 minutes and 30 seconds. On every wall, screen and set of lips at Audi's new Formula 1 base in southern Germany is a reminder of just how little time remains until the Four Rings grace a grand prix for the first time in 87 years.

But as the team hurtles towards that milestone, it faces a great many questions that remain unanswered. Not only has Audi made the decision to enter the fastest-moving motorsport category in a season in which its ruleset is being totally overhauled, but it has also decided to go it completely alone. Aside from purchasing long-established backmarker team Sauber, which will build the team's chassis, each and every element of the new team is being developed from the ground up. And to top it all off, Audi wants to fight for a championship within just four years.

Crucially, Audi has opted to build its own power unit, no doubt discontented by the optics of becoming a client – a subordinate – to Mercedes-AMG, Honda, Ferrari or Red Bull-Ford. This, chief operations officer Christian Foyer admits, puts the team "six years behind" competition that includes another newcomer, Cadillac, which will initially run Ferrari power units.

Nonetheless, "I don't think we have anything to fear", says Foyer as he walks us down the corridors of the F1 factory at Audi's motorsport competence centre in Neuburg an der Donau. It's an incognito building; a brutal amalgam of blackened steel tucked around the back of an equally brutal-looking test track.

Audi expanded Neuburg motorsport facility to house F1 engineering



L-R: bosses Wheatley, Binotto and Döllner; livery designer Frascella; drivers Hülkenberg and Bortoleto

The scale of what lies within is revealed only once you enter. You're made to lock your devices away and swear to secrecy before being ushered through a pair of locked doors – at which point you're hit by the sheer heat. Electricals screech relentlessly as the winter chill is blasted away by a furnace-like wave of warmth, so packed is the building with computers and scanning machines.

Our first stop on the maze of anonymous white corridors is the fuel lab – central to any success that Audi might achieve in the coming years. Key to the new regulations that will come into effect next year (see overleaf) is the move from E10 fuel, like that sold on forecourts, to a carbon-neutral alternative, be that a biofuel or e-fuel.

This, says quality manager Klaus Spang, allows it to be tailored precisely to an engine's specific combustion process, potentially unlocking greater performance. But it also brings uncertainty in combustion behaviour. Endless flasks of different-coloured fuels litter the workbenches for investigation.

Used oil is key to identifying any issues, explains Spang, and samples are put under a flame burning as intensely as 10,000deg C to test for impurities. But Audi has yet to run a complete engine in a test, let alone a race, so it has little idea what to expect from its first season in F1.

Further muddying the waters are strict limits on how much testing teams can do: from 2026, they're limited to 700 hours testing engines and 400 hours testing electrical components. Testing the full drivetrain detracts from both.

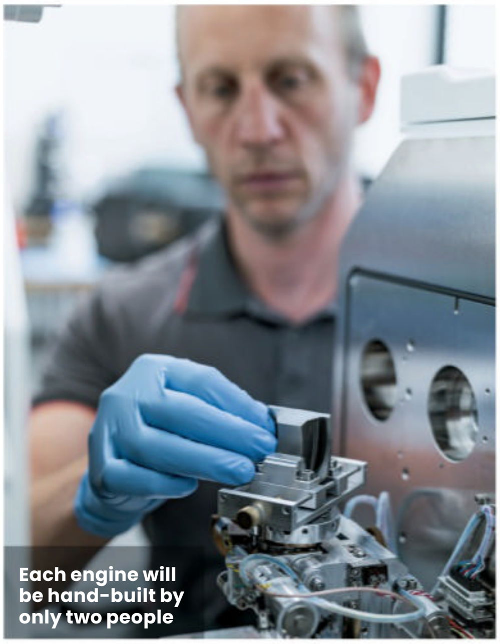
Contributing to the unease at Neuburg is that Audi is only just beginning tests of its engine, having focused on its hybrid system so far. ▸

◂ The clock is ticking very loudly indeed, yet the team has little to no idea how that new turbocharged V6 will perform.

That uncertainty has informed Audi's approach to procurement: although each F1 driver will be allowed to use only three engines throughout the 2026 season, Audi expects to build somewhere between 50 and 100 in total. The best of the bunch will be reserved for the races, while the rest will be bound for further testing and development. Each will be worked on by only two engineers, and as we pass the workshop there's a nervous energy in the air as exhaust systems, blocks and internals are carted around. Everyone seems to be trying their hardest, but to what end remains very unclear.

Deep in the facility lies what Foyer dubs 'mission control'. There's an immediate shift in the atmosphere as we enter: where the industrial elements of the factory have bare plastered walls and brilliant white lighting, this zone is all painted black, with cinema-style spotlights. Seriousness descends. To scale the narrow staircase and peep the massive projection of race data is how it must feel to walk into the Pentagon's nerve centre right as it moves up a peg on the Defcon ladder. There's an utter barrage of race data, television camera feeds and radio transcripts displayed, yet an air of orderliness remains in the room.

The existence of this room is itself a quirk of how Audi has entered F1. Sauber already has this infrastructure at its base in Hinwil, Switzerland, and the control room there will be operated in parallel with this one in Neuburg. That's 66 engineers split across two countries, working with another 58 trackside at every grand prix, bringing with them a dizzying number of layers of seniority, tasks and, of course, data.


Each engine will be hand-built by only two people

No cheating: FIA monitors every team's testing

Team principal Jonathan Wheatley "steers much of the process", says Foyer, but this seems to be a significant step up in scale compared with his previous tenure as sporting director of Milton Keynes-based Red Bull Racing.

Audi isn't ignorant of the challenge it has taken on. "Having set 2030 as our objective to fight for a championship, we are fully aware of how difficult it is," project director Mattia Binotto – a former Scuderia Ferrari principal – tells Autocar. "If we manage our expectations and ambitions, the pressure will be managed, but we need to get used to it. Pressure is a part of our world."

Yet Binotto is certain about the necessity of the difficult decisions made up to this point: "When the choices were made, I wasn't yet part of the project, but no doubt that it was a clear decision to become successful and a winning team in the future. Yes, it may add complexity, but it's a requirement. Having full control of the chassis and the power unit gives you a competitive advantage, a technical advantage, and because Audi is [planning on] not only participating but winning, it was a given. We accept the complexity because we have a clear ambition."

The overwhelming sentiment is that nobody really knows where Audi – or indeed any of the other 10 teams – will land in the pecking order next year, with such a drastic change in regulation. Binotto admits his team has no real clue, as "all the parameters we knew before are not true any more".

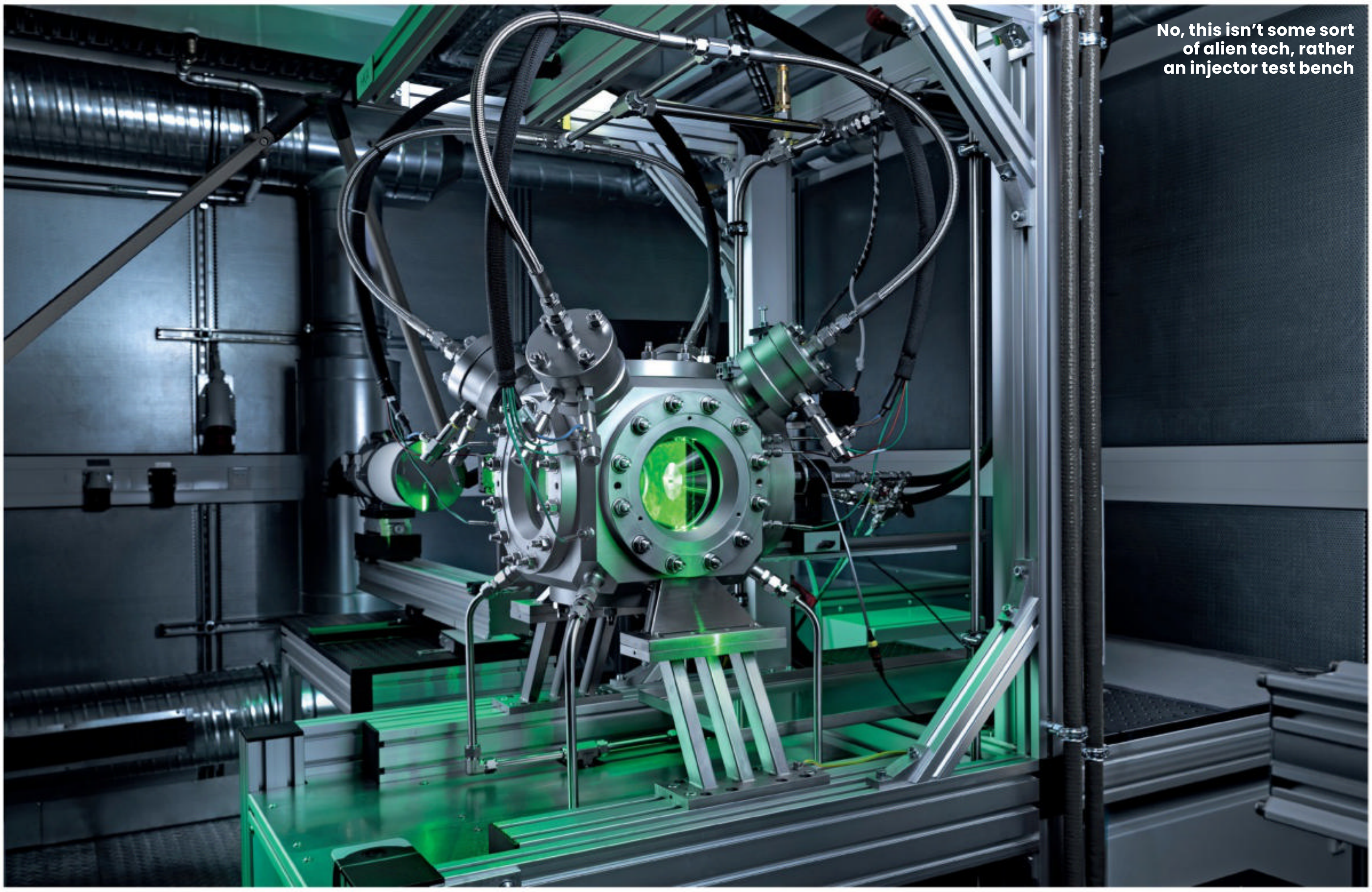
He continues: "What was important before in terms of performance may change today or tomorrow. For decades we have fine-tuned our tools around the regulations, so we know what's going to be fast and what's important to be fast, and I think that's the biggest change for the future. What will be more important is a

RULE CHANGES FOR 2026

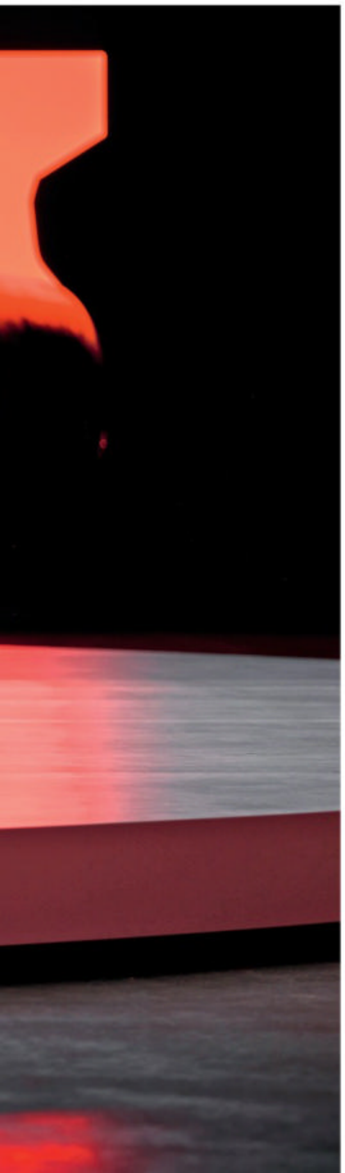
The forthcoming overhaul of F1's technical regulations, placing greater emphasis on the powertrain's electric side and sustainable engine fuels, was a major factor in Audi's decision to join the sport. Here's what's different.

- Electric motors will comprise half the car's total power output, up from 15% currently.
- Engines will run on 100% sustainable, carbon-neutral fuels.
- Cars will be around 30kg lighter, with a minimum weight of 768kg.
- Cars will be 200mm shorter and 100mm narrower.
- Tyres will be 25mm narrower up front, 30mm narrower at the rear.
- Drag Reduction System (DRS) will be removed in favour of active front and rear spoilers with low-drag and high-downforce modes, plus a power boost for drivers within a second of the car ahead.

> *"Having full control of the chassis and the power unit gives an advantage. We accept the complexity because we have a clear ambition"*



No, this isn't some sort of alien tech, rather an injector test bench



question mark today: if you ask our tools today, they may give you an answer but I think the reality and the facts may be different when we start [racing]."

Wheatley also acknowledges the challenge but is notably more buoyant than his colleague about the state of the team today. "I was hugely encouraged by what I found, which was a much younger team than I expected with a more open mind than I expected," he says.

Indeed, he believes the Sauber team that he joined this year has "already started the journey towards becoming a competitive Formula 1 team rather than it being an achievement to get two cars to a race every Sunday" before it has even begun to wear Audi branding.

As evidence, he points to rookie Gabriel Bortoleto's shocking wreck in the sprint race before the recent Brazilian Grand Prix. "The team almost performed the incredible in Brazil in rebuilding – or building a brand-new car – for Gabriel in an incredibly short period of time," he says. "This team wouldn't have been able to do that a year ago, and that doesn't come from tools or investment, that comes from spirit, that comes from the team believing in itself."

What is clear is that Audi does indeed expect to win. "From the Auto Union Silver Arrows of the 1930s [see right] to touring car dominance, rallying and hybrid drivetrain dominance at the Le Mans 24 Hours, whenever Audi enters a racing series, success follows," says company CEO Gernot Döllner.

"Audi has never entered a racing series just to compete but to lead, to innovate and to win. That's exactly what we are striving for in Formula 1," he continues. "When I took over as CEO two years ago, we made the decision to sharpen our approach to Formula 1, because there are only two ways to do it. You do it right or you don't do it at all."

Audi has glittering past across a spectrum of categories

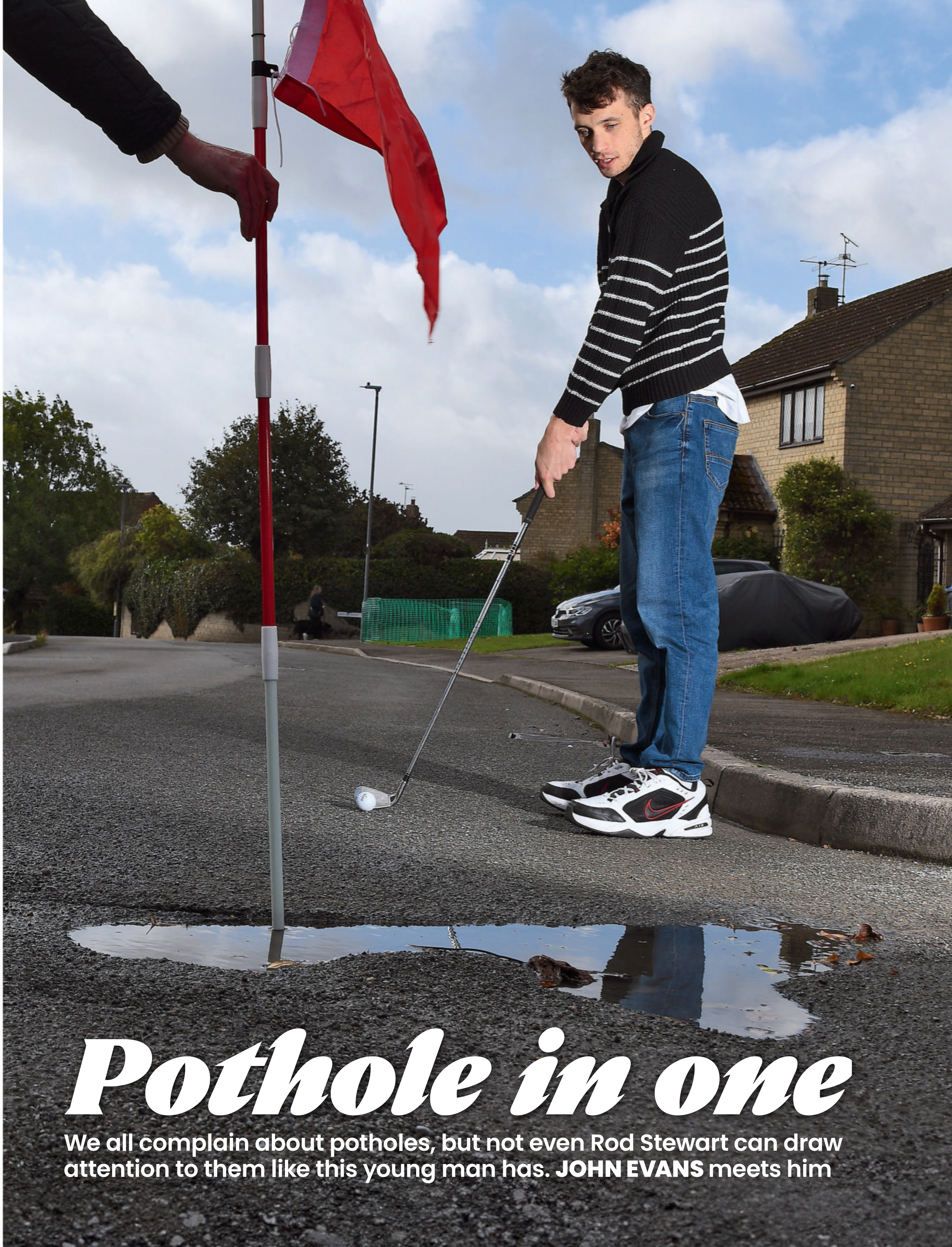
AUDI'S GRAND PRIX HISTORY

It's pleasing to see that, despite the painfully awkward political background, Audi is acknowledging its grand prix heritage. Between 1935 and 1939, the biggest honour in motorsport wasn't the FIA Formula 1 World Championship but the AIACR European Championship – which existed under crushing German domination. Mercedes-Benz won three times, Auto Union twice, but the two varieties of Silver Arrow were equally mind-boggling. Alfa Romeo and Bugatti, for years seemingly assured of every win, suddenly didn't stand a chance.

Unusually for the time, Auto Union placed the driver in front of a mid-mounted engine – initially a supercharged 4.4-litre V16 with 290bhp and ultimately evolved to 6.0 litres and 520bhp. In 1936, for crying out loud, all through a manual gearbox and what look like bicycle wheels with drum brakes. And that sound… it's a barking from the depths of hell.

This was the car that took Auto Union's most famous driver, the young German Bernd Rosemeyer, to its first title in 1936, having won three of the four points-scoring races and two more besides.

Auto Union took just four races to win. Audi would probably be happy to do the same after four years… **KC**



Pothole in one

We all complain about potholes, but not even Rod Stewart can draw attention to them like this young man has. **JOHN EVANS** meets him

Cereal offenders: UK roads have more than a million potholes

Fancy having road chippings with your Weetabix? Eating the popular cereal from a pothole is the latest stunt by local campaigner Ben Thornbury designed to highlight the problem of potholes on the roads in and around his home town of Malmesbury, Wiltshire.

Two years ago, when he created a crazy golf course from potholes on the town's high street and invited locals to play, three weeks later the council resurfaced the entire road. Coincidence or not, buoyed by that success Thornbury followed it up with more pothole golf, this time on St Mary's Street, elsewhere in the town. Last year, he moved onto pothole fishing on a road close to Malmesbury's famous abbey. A short while later, the council patched up the potholes – but by early 2025 they had reappeared, so the council resurfaced it. In July, Thornbury came up with the idea of eating Weetabix from a pothole, a stunt he performed in Somerford Keynes, a nearby village. Most recently, in August, he painted some of Malmesbury's potholes with St George's Crosses.

Reflecting on his stunts, Thornbury says: "I won't do the Weetabix one again – milk and gravel isn't very nice – and the council has warned that painting potholes is vandalism and won't help bring repairs forward. But pothole golf was great fun and I think made a difference. People queued to have a go and drivers tooted their car horns in support. A local councillor told me he believed the stunts encouraged Wiltshire Council to resurface the roads."

The council denies this. Leader Ian Thorn told Autocar: "We have invested significant extra funds into repairing and maintaining Wiltshire's roads over the past two years. This is making a real difference in all parts of the county, including Malmesbury. This work has been planned for several years and is not the result of any campaign. This hard work is paying off, as in the first six months of this year there has been a 44% fall in the number of potholes reported to us compared with the same period in 2024. We will continue to work hard to improve Wiltshire's roads."

Still, Thornbury's efforts at least resonated with other council offices, as well as with aggrieved motorists nationwide. For example, Joe Harris, cabinet member for highways at Gloucestershire County Council, has invited him to Cirencester to see how the council repairs potholes. Meanwhile, towns and villages across the UK have asked him to publicise their potholes. It's quite an achievement for a young chap who is only just learning to drive.

I've arranged to meet Thornbury at his home in a quiet street just outside Malmesbury town centre. The 20-year-old has just completed a three-year college course in digital support services and is currently undertaking a retail apprenticeship. He's a modest lad but clearly a determined one who isn't afraid to make his point. This much is obvious when, without a second's thought, he agrees to recreate his pothole fishing stunt on a nearby road, pushing his props – which include a stuffed pike and a watering can for topping up the pothole – there in a wheelbarrow.

"I got the idea for the pothole stunts from an internet meme of a chap playing golf in potholes," says Thornbury. "I manage Malmesbury's Facebook page. It has 17,000 members and lots of them were posting about all the potholes in the town, saying they had damaged their cars. I thought recreating the pothole golf meme for real would show the council it had a serious problem. The success of the stunts has made me want to do more local campaigning. Where people take to social media to complain, I like to act."

As autumn takes hold, the nation's motorists could do with more people like Thornbury highlighting the problem of potholes and poor roads maintenance. It is estimated that there are more than one million potholes on UK roads. The RAC says that between April and June it experienced a surge in the number of pothole-related vehicle breakdowns, with patrols responding to 9% more incidents than during the same period last year. It attributed the increase to colder than average weather in early 2025 accelerating pothole formation. Vehicles suffered broken shock absorbers and suspension springs and bent wheels – damage valued at around £600 per vehicle.

In December last year, the government announced highways authorities across England would receive £1.6 billion in funding for filling potholes and repairing roads. A quarter of the funding councils receive will be dependent on them publishing annual reports detailing how many potholes they have identified and repaired.

Transport secretary Heidi Alexander said: "The public deserves to know how their councils are improving their local roads, which is why they will have to show progress or risk losing funding."

According to Department for Transport figures, West Northamptonshire has the worst road surfaces in the UK, with around 83% of roads needing improvement. Derbyshire ranks second with the worst A-roads and motorways. It looks like Thornbury and his wheelbarrow are going to be kept busy.

"Milk and gravel isn't nice, but golf was great fun"

Thornbury believes his public stunts spur councils into action

HOW TO CLAIM FOR POTHOLE DAMAGE AND APPEAL A DECISION

How to claim

- If it's safe to do so, take photographs and measurements of the pothole and, if possible, gather witness statements. Obtain an invoice for the repair to your vehicle. Check the FixMyStreet app to see if the pothole has already been reported.
- Report the incident to the relevant council. However, the council can't be held liable for a defect it wasn't aware of, either because it hasn't been reported or it hasn't been picked up by its own inspection and maintenance teams. This is a popular defence.
- If it thinks you have a case, the council will send you a report form to complete. Include the supporting material you have gathered.

How to appeal

- Around three-quarters of claims for pothole damage to vehicles are rejected by councils each year. Not every council has a formal appeals process, but you can still ask any to review its decision.
- Again, you have to be able to prove the council has been negligent. Submit a freedom of information request asking, for example, how many reports of the pothole the council had received and how many claims it has accepted or rejected.
- If you believe the council knew about the defect but failed to repair it in time and it still rejects your claim, you can pursue the matter through a small claims court.

LIVING WITH A…

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"The GTE was the comfiest car I've driven this year"

FINAL REPORT **MILEAGE 4860**

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTE

We unplug this PHEV for the last time and ponder if it was a smart choice

WHY WE RAN IT To see if the latest hot PHEV Golf is truly a wallet-friendly alternative to the beloved GTI

An email sent to me by reader Rob Lightbody provides an ideal starting point for this final report and ties in nicely with the mission statement for our long-term test car displayed above.

"As the owner of a 2017 Golf GTI, I was wondering if you think you'd be better off in the GTI version instead of the GTE," he asked. "The boot in the GTI is quite a lot bigger and you'd have no large cable to store. You'd lose some MPG, but on a longer run I get over 40mpg."

This is an interesting question from Rob, especially given that the GTI, at £41,810, costs only a little over £1500 more than the GTE, so going for the sportier option might seem like a bit of a no-brainer.

But it's not quite as cut and dried as that, based on my time with the plug-in hybrid Golf at least.

For starters, as with the GTI, it looks brilliant. I especially liked its aggressive front end and our Crystal Ice Blue paint (a £1375 option). I just wish it had some visible exhausts (the GTE's are hidden) and that there was an option to turn off the boy-racer-style illuminated badges.

Then there's the interior. The GTE was the comfiest car I've driven this year, thanks in large part to its deep, bolstered seats. Long drives, of which I undertook many, never resulted in a sore bum.

I also liked the 12.9in infotainment screen, which, while garish, was responsive, sharp and just very good to use. The touch controls I could have done without – especially for the sliding roof, which sometimes didn't register a connection.

It's a shame the cabin of our car was a rather drab affair, though, filled with dull colours (lots of grey), while the materials, such as the black plastic trim, felt cheap.

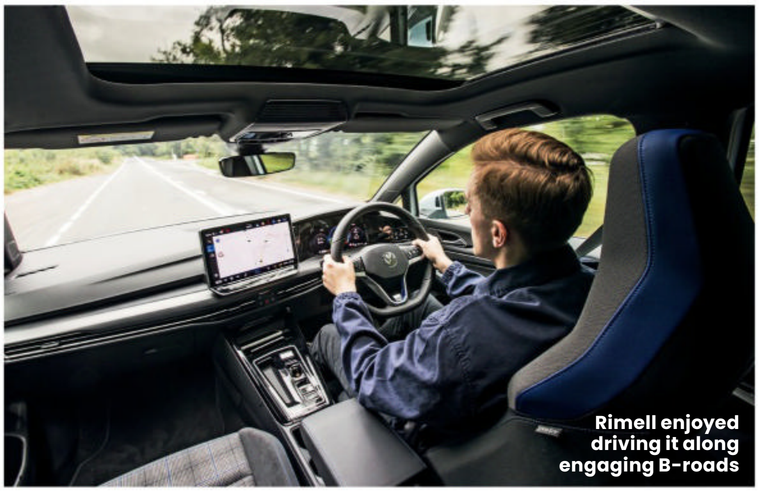
And Rob's got a point about the storage space on offer. I had a moan in a previous report about the GTE's modest 273-litre boot capacity, made worse by the lack of a dedicated place to stow the charging cables. Because it doesn't have a 19.4kWh battery sited under the boot, the GTI consequently has 100 additional litres of storage space.

It's not the sort of thing you'll notice on a daily basis – more when

SECOND OPINION

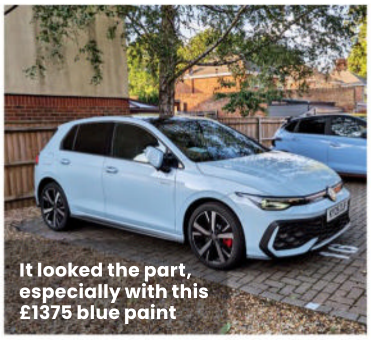
I just can't see a rightful place for PHEVs. Compared with a pure-ICE car or an EV, they give you the worst of both worlds – even when they're among the best of the bunch, as the Golf GTE surely is. It can be a brilliant everyday family car or an absolute blast. But then so can the Golf GTI. **KC**

It tilts when you need rear camera



Rimell enjoyed driving it along engaging B-roads

Battery makes the PHEV's boot smaller than an ICE Golf's



It looked the part, especially with this £1375 blue paint

Without a wallbox at home, Rimell found charging a pricey faff

you're planning time away. For example, only one suitcase, or two weekend bags, could fit in the boot of the five-seater at any one time.

But, crucially for a car with a sporty positioning, the GTE was fun to drive when those journeys came around. It didn't have the measure of the more focused GTI, true, but its confidence-inspiring grip levels, sound chassis set-up and weighty steering also encouraged me to take the longer, B-road route home on a regular basis.

I made sure I had enough battery charge at my disposal on those occasions, as the additional torque of the front motor turned the GTE into a corner killer.

Rob's final point concerning the MPG will be just as important for prospective GTE owners.

As I don't have a home charger, I'm clearly not VW's target audience for such a car. But given the rise of company car schemes, coupled with the GTE's very low £40-per-month benefit-in-kind tax (by comparison, a GTI owner must cough up £243 in BIK), the GTE is very likely to end up with some of the 43% of UK residents who do not have access to a private driveway.

So, for me, I had to use (heinously expensive) public chargers to keep the GTE's 19.4kWh pack topped up. While those 60 engine-off real-world miles bumped my average MPG to a lofty best of 77(!), it actually made the cost per mile, on average, more expensive (19p) than if I'd run it purely on the 1.5-litre petrol four (12p) instead.

This was a key reason why I, more often than not, ran the hatch solely on petrol power – achieving 46.7mpg overall, so probably not too dissimilar to the "over 40mpg" that Rob gets in his GTI on a longer run.

These figures are more of an indictment of the cost of public charging than they are of the plug-in hybrid. However, the GTE with a full, 'self-charging' hybrid powertrain would make more sense to me, while broadening its appeal. As luck would have it (News, p10), Volkswagen is looking to bring such a powertrain to the Golf line-up, so watch this space.

Anyway, back to the original question: would I be better off in a GTI? If I had the means to buy and run a GTI, I'd go for it. But if I were a company car user given the choice of both cars, the £2436 annual BIK savings would potentially be enough to turn my head. While not as refined as the GTI, this is still a great car – and, as the brief demands, one that's fun to drive.

WILL RIMELL

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
will.rimell@haymarket.com

TEST DATA

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTE

MILEAGE

At start 134
At end 4860

PRICES

List price new £40,140
List price now £40,140
Price as tested £44,435

OPTIONS

Crystal Ice Blue metallic paint with black roof £1375, panoramic sunroof £1250, Adaptive Chassis Control £735, 18in Catania black alloy wheels £600, parking camera £335

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed economy 849.9mpg
Claimed EV range 81 miles
Fuel tank 40 litres
Test average 46.7mpg
Test best 77.0mpg
Test worst 39.0mpg
Real-world range 398 miles (ICE only)
Real-world EV range 60 miles

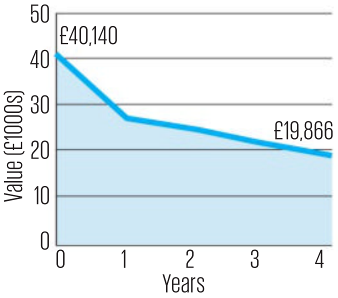
TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 6.6sec
Top speed 143mph
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbo, petrol, plus electric motor
Max power 268bhp
Max torque 258lb ft
Gearbox 6-spd dual-clutch automatic
Boot 273 litres
Wheels 18in, alloy
Tyres 225/40 R18 Bridgestone Potenza
Kerb weight 1670kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £716.49 pcm
CO_2 8g/km
Service costs None
Other costs None
Fuel costs £881.83
Running costs including fuel £881.83
Cost per mile 19 pence
Faults None

DEPRECIATION



PREVIOUS REPORTS

20 Aug, 27 Aug, 10 Sep, 17 Sep, 1 Oct, 8 Oct, 22 Oct, 5 Nov, 19 Nov

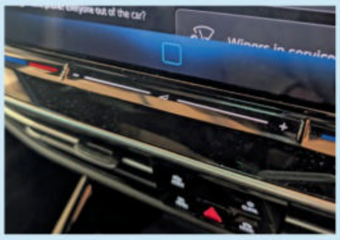
LOVE IT

FRONT SEATS
Deep, bolstered and clad in that GTI-style chequered design, the seats were among the best I've encountered this year.

APPEARANCE
I thought the GTE looked the business – especially the front end. However, marks off for hiding the tailpipes.

DRIVER SATISFACTION
I took the long way home a number of times as the GTE was a great laugh when pushed through sweeping country roads.

LOATHE IT



TOUCH CONTROLS
Found on the steering wheel and throughout the cabin, they're either too sensitive or not responsive.

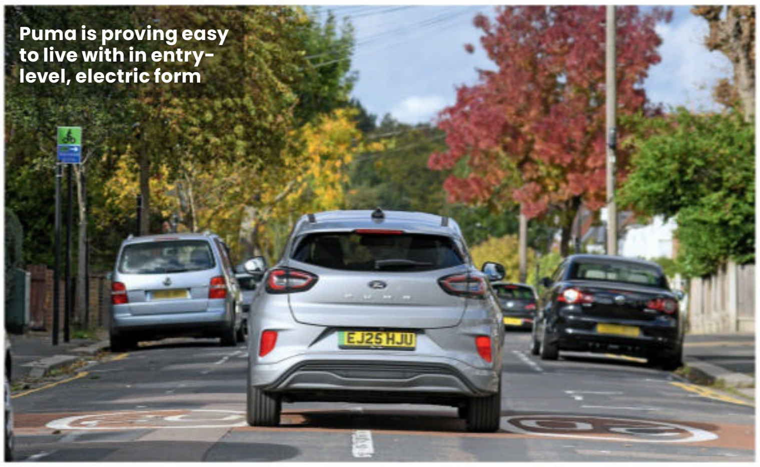
BLACK PLASTIC TRIM
In my view, it really cheapens a car interior in 2025 and reeks of lazy design. It's also a fingerprint magnet.

FIRST REPORT

FORD PUMA GEN-E

Electric version of Britain's best-selling car joins the Autocar fleet

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT Is this the best cheap EV on the market?



Puma is proving easy to live with in entry-level, electric form

Seating position is just right, and the tech works well so far

Dear reader, an interesting bit of insight into your life landed in my inbox recently: fresh Autocar market research with some illuminating statistics, figures and overall feelings towards lots of things. In fact, it's possible that you personally took part in the survey.

There is no getting around it: statistically, I am likely to be a good chunk younger than you. Which is why I'm deploying a bit of empathy and stepping into your shoes. A lot of you reading this might not be too interested in buying a new electric vehicle. You might consider them to be a pain to charge, with too much technology and, even worse, boring.

But I'm hoping this Ford Puma Gen-E will offer a bit of a fresh perspective, because with just the right amount of blue-sky thinking and some man maths, it might begin to make sense. The Puma Gen-E is cheap. So cheap that using it could save you money under the right circumstances. Here's the thinking: if you've been on a leasing configurator in the past few months you will have seen a Puma Gen-E in the massive 'oh my goodness, 100/100 value' section. The best deal I've seen is £132 per month with a £1884 deposit and 5000 miles per year, but you could upgrade to 8000 miles for another £20 per month. These cars are flooding the leasing market. ZEV? ECG? You betcha. That's £3468 in total for a year's worth of drudgery driving. To the shops, supermarket and hospital in a car that could cost as little as 6p or 7p per mile, assuming you are able to charge from home.

Reader, you're a clever sort. So I imagine your investment strategy is diverse and robust – and you can see where I'm going with this. Instead of ploughing capital into a new or used car, you could just finance a cheap EV such as this Gen-E and use the cash you might have spent to top up your pension or Vanguard S&P 500 tracker – or, better yet, a second car. A classic or weekend car to own, enjoy and tinker with – while the cheap EV sits there to do the car-type things.

But anyway. Choosing the cheap EV in this hypothetical situation is devilishly important. During my time with this car I want to figure out not only if it's good enough for this type of thing but also whether it's simply a good car, full stop. I want to know if it's easy to live with, how far it will go on a charge, if it's easy to park, if it's big enough for my lifestyle and if it charges okay.

It's looking very good so far. At

Select trim's 17s give the best range, at a claimed 234 miles

"Do you know what? It's lovely. Everything I want and nothing I don't" the time of writing I haven't covered huge ground in it, so I'll fill in some driving details later. But it's proven easy to live with already. For one, it didn't make me sign into anything when I first stepped inside. The seating position is spot on, too. It's high enough so it's a cinch to get into but not so high that it feels like I'm perching over the top of everything. Oh, and the wireless Apple CarPlay is simple to set up and has been faultless so far. This may seem superficial to you, but it's something that really winds me up, and it is not done as well as you might think in many new cars.

Choosing a Puma Gen-E is straightforward enough: there's just the one battery and power choice. Under the floor you will find a 43.6kWh battery that teams up with a 166bhp motor to power the front wheels. The WLTP range figure depends slightly on which spec you choose, because wheel size makes a difference. I've gone for boggo Select trim for two reasons: first, it offers the longest official range, at 234 miles; second, it's the specification found on those super-cheap leasing deals.

And do you know what? It's lovely. Everything I want and nothing I don't. All the connectivity, 17in wheels, one of the clearest parking cameras in the game. Cruise control, too, and not the adaptive kind, is a win for me, because I think these systems (from legacy manufacturers at least) are progressively getting worse in their functionality, less reliable and more prone to not working.

The next spec up, Premium, has 18in wheels, a better sound system and faux leather – none of which I am bothered about. The spec above that, Sound Edition, gets different 18in wheels and an even more banging sound system. Again, not bothered. But I have optioned the Winter Pack, for its heated steering wheel and front seats, as well as the Comfort Pack, with an electric tailgate, keyless entry and puddle lights with the Puma logo. That last of which is proper naff.

Could this Gen-E be peak daily driver? Let's find out.

MURRAY SCULLION

TEST DATA

FORD PUMA GEN-E SELECT

Price new £29,995 **Price as tested** £31,795 **Options** Solar Silver metallic paint £800, Comfort Pack £650, Winter Pack £350 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 234 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 4.7mpkWh (WLTP)

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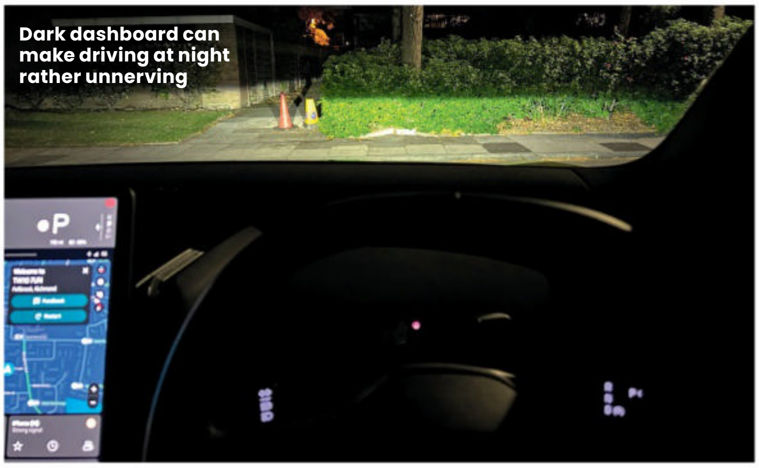
SECOND OPINION

Murray has done well to get the basic Select: it's the better-riding version in my experience and it allows you to better enjoy the Puma's quietly engaging handling. This car may be electric, but the relationship between steering response and roll take-up is pure Ford. Add a reasonably grippy front axle and things are kept interesting. **RL**



Dark dashboard can make driving at night rather unnerving

VOLVO EX30

Is its minimalism a result of being eco-friendly or just cutting costs?

MILEAGE 5671

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if the clever design of this small EV can win us over in extended use

The ever-shortening days and the arrival of colder weather often present a challenge for EVs, and sometimes in unexpected ways.

Inspired by Tesla, the Volvo EX30 is now one of many EVs that have forgone a traditional instrument display and instead stuck key information such as your speed on the top edge of the central screen. It's not a layout I'm a particular fan of but is one I've grown accustomed to and can live with.

But it caused an unusual wrinkle when I first did an extended drive in the EX30 in the dark: I found the total lack of illumination behind the steering wheel really quite off-putting. The top of the steering wheel simply faded into the darkness, the only light source behind it being a small red light showing the presence of the driver attention monitor.

I initially found it quite difficult to keep tabs on the wheel when turning, and the darkness meant it was hard to know at a quick glance how much steering lock I had on. I eventually adjusted to it, but again it doesn't feel that natural.

Volvo says part of the reason the EX30 does without an instrument display is to reduce the number of components and elements, reducing the environmental impact of its manufacture – which, not coincidentally, also makes it cheaper to produce. Given that Volvo is now regarded as a premium brand, it's quite a challenge to do that without making the EX30 feel a bit cheap inside, but the firm has largely succeeded.

The interior door material does feel a little flimsy and the thunk when you shut the doors is a touch on the tinny side, while the Nordico synthetic-leather upholstery looks the part but doesn't have the true luxury feel that premium buyers would expect.

For the most part, though, the reductive design works really well. For example, there's a single Bang & Olufsen soundbar in place of an array of speakers, yet the audio sounds fantastic to me. And I'm quite enjoying the retro charm of having seats that are largely adjusted manually.

The approach works well, because Volvo has done such a convincing job making the EX30 look and feel premium that you can excuse many of the areas where the cost-saving shows. Most of the time. Because there are occasions, like when you're driving at night and your dashboard is dark save for the unblinking light of a driver attention monitor, when you're reminded of some of the bits the EX30 is missing.

JAMES ATTWOOD

LOVE IT

OFF YOU GO

The driver attention monitor can be swiftly turned off via the touchscreen. The red light stays on regardless, mind.

LOATHE IT

WRONG WAY ROUND

The EX30 displays efficiency as kWh per 100 miles, rather than miles per kilowatt hours, and I'm not smart enough to do the conversion while driving.

TEST DATA

VOLVO EX30 SINGLE MOTOR EXTENDED RANGE RWD PLUS

Price new £39,850 **Price as tested** £39,850 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 240 miles **Economy** 3.1mpkWh **Last seen** 12.11.25

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james.attwood@haymarket.com

RENAULT 5

Popular car's enduring appeal is proving to be more than skin deep

MILEAGE 12,607

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To discover if Renault's retro-infused EV hit is as good to live with as it is to look at

It's not quite curtains for our Renault 5 yet, but its departure from our long-term fleet is fast approaching. It's therefore definitely time we started talking about what worked and why, rather than conveying too much further excitement about its arrival (even if privately I still have such feelings).

Two things continue to stand out about this rule-changing Renault, and I suspect they would still be highlights in a year's time, were it to remain on our fleet. One is the car's sheer, enduring star quality; the other is the maturity of its development, especially given that it was rushed into production from a standing start.

The story of the 5's rapid journey from an idea to the showroom, having been spotted as a static concept in the design studio by the arriving (and now departed) Renault Group chief Luca de Meo in July 2020, will always be part of Renault folklore. Given this, the car's well-honed, all-round functionality continues to surprise; I've found no major flaws even after six months' no-nonsense daily use.

The 5's star quality never even looks like waning. Even though it has been on sale in the UK for nearly a year and it has spent most of those months near the top of the EV charts, people still react with remarkable enthusiasm to its arrival anywhere, even at events like Goodwood or Bicester Heritage meetings, which are stuffed with high-tone vehicles.

You get used to smiling people rushing at you in shopping centre car parks, begging a chance to peep into the cabin, and you're always the star at charging stations.

Our particular 5's ultra-bright Pop Yellow metallic paint job undoubtedly helps the attention, but as anyone who has ever owned a yellow car knows, the underlying model needs a funk, a shape to justify such a bright set of clothes.

Were I specifying one of these for my own use, I would choose an Ultimate model (as that trim gets you Iconic Yellow upholstery) with Pop Yellow paint and the Diamond Black roof option in a heartbeat, although I could probably be persuaded into the Arctic White as well, so long as it came with that same black roof with red edging.

LOVE IT

CONVERSATION STARTER

People don't just love the 5's shape, they want to debate it with you. All age groups love it too, whether they remember the original model or not.

LOATHE IT

NO FRUNK

Renault once accommodated spare wheels under its cars' bonnets. Nowadays it can't even find enough space for a coiled charging cable.

All the admirers and well-wishers help the charging time fly by

It's hard to see a case for the lower-powered (118bhp, rather than 148bhp) motor, since it always comes with the smaller (40kWh against 52kWh) Urban Range battery. The punchier motor gives the 5 very impressive step-off acceleration and the bigger Comfort Range battery gives you a reliable range of 190-200 miles at this time of the year, whereas the small one, even driving a less powerful motor, is only good for 150-160 miles. Spend the extra would be my advice.

Having talked economy, I have to confess that I've encountered a wide disparity in the miles-per-kilowatt-hour figures while driving our car. In gentle town running or consistent low rural speeds, you can drive it over 5.0mpkWh, a very impressive figure. When tooling about on A- and B-roads, you can keep it well into the 4.3-4.5 range, again a good performance. But there are also times when it sticks stubbornly in the mid-threes, and I can't seem to do much about it. I'm one of those fetishists who chase good figures, so overall I've managed to keep our average economy in the early fours. A less obsessed driver would return 3.6 and be happy.

If you consistently do 2000 miles a month in any car, you pretty soon form an accurate idea of the maturity and durability of its controls and switchgear, and this is where, in my book, the 5 really deserves plaudits. It's easy to operate, there's zero evidence of flimsiness (a 5 flaw from the olden days) and when you get the car valeted (which is what our photographers like) it comes up showroom-fresh.

That overriding impression of durability informs my whole 12,600-mile life with our 5. From what I now know, these cars are going to last a long time, both as leading EV market offerings and, once sold, as individuals.

STEVE CROPLEY

TEST DATA

RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE

Price new £28,995 **Price as tested** £30,195 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 180 miles **Economy** 4.1mpkWh **Last seen** 12.11.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
steve.cropley@haymarket.com

MORGAN SUPER 3

The specs are as important as those on your face

MILEAGE 2980
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT Because it might just be the most fun car you can drive at any speed

RESERVED
RESERVED

Prior spotted a Day-Glo Super 3 in Malvern, but this one's more his style

It doesn't matter where you go, even Goodwood or Hethel: whatever else you see, the Super 3 makes itself the centre of attention.

So how, having spent a few months almost daily-driving a Super 3, do I think one should be specced? I ask because I have been on the configurator again. And for a car that has only one mechanical specification (a 1.5-litre Ford three-cylinder engine, a manual gearbox and not even wheel or tyre options), a lot of customisation is possible. I think it could make the difference between having a pretty nice one and the perfect fun car. And soon to be facing the terrifying situation that I won't be spending any more time with it, I think I have a better idea of what my (if not the) perfect Super 3 looks like.

This one, which some Autocar staffers and Morgan designers collaborated to create a few months ago (presumably soon to be available through your local Morgan stockist, if you're tempted), runs the sweet spot very close.

Colour and trim are, of course, almost entirely subjective. In the big display box outside Morgan's headquarters the last time I went was a bright-pink Super 3, ordered as one of a pair alongside a highlighter-yellow one. And while I appreciate the added safety that surely comes with driving a Day-Glo three-wheeler, it was a bit much. Morgan still has an early launch car on its customer experience fleet in a kind of metallic greeny grey, which I think looks just superb. The amber fly screens really set it off, too, to my eyes.

There are three free colours (an orange, a blue and a green, all gloss-finished), and from that point onwards the world is your lobster. If you wanted to, you could spend £2495 on a pearlescent finish, but given that "basically any colour you want" is £895 (solid) or £1295 (metallic), with matt rather than gloss lacquer an added £295, I think that's what I'd choose.

If you're short on inspiration, closing your eyes and clicking on the cursor randomly within the colour swatch square yields really interesting results. Colours crop up that look great but which I wouldn't have thought to aim for. I love the contrast cowl (£495), but again your mileage may vary.

Trim is largely subjective too, although some may wear better than others. At nearly 3000 miles, the Smooth Typhoon black leather (£995) is starting to show a couple of ruffles on the driver's side. Part of the charm, I think: all Super 3s are fairly new, and owning something that patinates in your ownership is a lovely thing to me.

If you're in the UK, I'd absolutely tick the heated seat and footwell heater options, which I have found make a huge difference, on anything other than the warmest days, to how pleasing the Super 3 is. Even an evening drive in summer is made more pleasant.

I also think the side luggage racks (£695, plus the requirement of £245 accessory rails) are extremely useful. I don't think, though, that I'd spec the Exo rear rack (£1295). The time it takes to undo the two stiff knurled knobs to swing it out of the way to get access to the regular boot (an odd shape, but I can squeeze more in it than I'd imagined, and it's dry too) has meant I've found the rack unnecessary. And I prefer the elegant shape of the rear without it.

That aside, I think this spec is as good as a Super 3 gets. And that's very good indeed.

MATT PRIOR

LOVE IT

CHEAP TO RUN

An average of nearly 50mpg seems commendable, even for something so small and light.

LOATHE IT

A RIGHT FAFF

The Dzus fasteners for the bonnet seem simple, but lining them up to secure them into place is a fiddle. Easier with a screwdriver.

TEST DATA

MORGAN SUPER 3

Price new £39,995 **Price as tested** £49,865 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 49.1mpg **Last seen** 19.11.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

WELCOME TO HETHEL - THE HOME OF LOTUS
VISITORS

Our test car's spec is hard to beat – but any Super 3 will turn heads

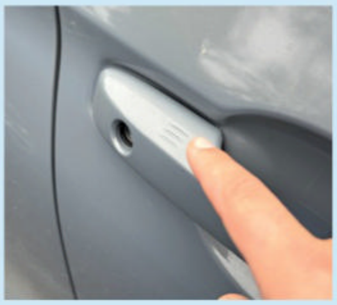
SNAPSHOTS

SKODA ELROQ

Mileage 4200 **Last seen** 19.11.25
I rarely have cause to think about charge port placement, but I now wonder if it's actually quite important. The Elroq's is on the offside rear, which is usually perfect – except when I use this particular Ubitricity lamp-post charger, where I have to park facing this way and drape the cable across the muddy ground. Something like the Fiat Grande Panda EV's inbuilt retractable cable would be useful. **FP**

BYD DOLPHIN SURF

Mileage 1920 **Last seen** 19.11.25
While the baby BYD's interior is mostly solid and well built, it's not perfect. One of the two cupholders is too shallow, so water bottles and coffee cups are at risk of toppling over when you're cornering or negotiating a roundabout. Additionally, the panel to store your mobile phone is made of frictionless plastic, so mine has slid around and fallen off on occasion. **JW**



HONDA HR-V

Mileage 4481 **Last seen** 12.11.25
The keyless locking system on the HR-V is possibly the most sensible and easy to use I've ever encountered. Unlocking is a standard pull-the-handle affair but locking requires just a swipe over this sensor, whether that be from your finger or something like your arm if your hands happen to be full. Useful. **JH**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A RANGE ROVER

THE GO-ANYWHERE LIMO

An ‘L405’ Range Rover can do it all, but there are some vital ground rules

How good is the ‘L405’ generation of the Range Rover (2012-2021)? Put it this way: last year, we were confident enough to declare a used £55,000 L405 a better buy than a new Kia Sorento for the same price (Autocar, 2 October 2024). Which is especially attention-grabbing when you consider an L405 Rangie can now be picked up for just £10,000 (even though we would advise spending a little more, if you can).

And just look at it. It’s upright, stately, monolithic, inherently classy – unmistakably and unapologetically a Range Rover, in other words. While it’s not quite as regally brutalistic as its ‘L322’ predecessor, it’s a mighty fine piece of design and brought the lineage into the modern world with a 0.30 drag coefficient (down from 0.38), a kerb weight starting at 2160kg (down from 2438kg) and up to 40mpg as a result.

It impressed our road testers when it was new as well (see ‘What we said then’, above). They found this generation of Range Rover a joy to be with. It looks the part as you walk up to it, yet it’s not as overtly flashy as an equivalent BMW or Mercedes. Inside, that theme continues: it’s beautifully rich in feel and smell, with real leather and wood (metal/carbonfibre was also available) giving a warming and comfortable vibe.

Yes, the infotainment of early cars leaves a lot to be desired (the 2018 facelift improved usability and connectivity a lot) but the driving position is spot on – commanding like nothing else and with knobs and buttons within easy reach.

Classy cabin has usable buttons and excellent visibility

On the road, it delivers comfort and isolation that can only be beaten (in this lofty price bracket) by a Mercedes S-Class. What the Benz can't do, though, is tow 3500kg and wade 900mm. It's easy to forget how competent a Range Rover is over really challenging terrain when it's also so adept at trundling around town or shrinking the miles during a motorway slog.

The Range Rover works well in more everyday scenarios as a family chariot too. Its 900-litre boot (2000 litres with the seats folded) is cavernous, while the large glass area (with optional giant sunroof) helps to brighten the mood on a long haul. And it makes this five-by-two-metre beast relatively easy to place on the road and park.

There's tri-zone climate control (quad-zone was optional) to keep your VIP passengers comfortable, and even heating, cooling and massaging seats for four occupants on some models. Leg room is adequate – and amazing with the 200mm-longer LWB model.

As for the engines, they're all good, if temperamental. The base 3.0-litre V6 diesel delivers plenty of poke and reasonable economy (mid-30s to the gallon is realistic) while the 516lb ft, 4.4-litre V8 diesel is indulgent but not too punishing (30mpg is achievable). Most cars have one of these two options.

However, there's also a thirsty 5.0-litre petrol V8 with 503bhp, 517bhp, 542bhp or 557bhp. The plug-in hybrid that arrived with the 2018 facelift has a 2.0-litre petrol and thus feels a little inadequate, while the 40mpg-capable hybrid V6 diesel is rare but worth seeking out.

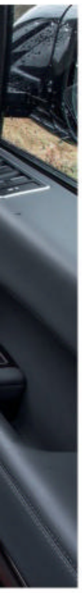
Whichever version you choose, the elephant in the room is the cost of running it. But it needn't be as bad as you might think. Buy the wrong one and it could be a money pit, sure. But buy with care and it could be the best all-rounder you'll ever own. The risk-reward factor is strong with this one.

ALEX WOLSTENHOLME

What we said then

12 DECEMBER 2012

"It may weigh as much as two normal family cars, but it should be able to do the job of at least that many. The Range Rover is so achingly close to being a five-star car that it hurts. And the more time you spend with it, being eased around the world in what is, without question, one of the finest and most impressive cars we've driven in a decade, the easier it becomes to justify."



It will offer sure-footed progress and make the miles melt away

> **"On the road, it delivers comfort and isolation that can only be beaten by a Mercedes S-Class"**

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

ALIE SMITH

"I've got an Autobiography on a 63-plate, now with 96,000 miles on the clock. I bought it five years ago when it had done 70,000 miles. I service it on the button at an LR specialist and seem to spend an additional £600 per year on the odd replacement part, on top of servicing costs. The car is utterly majestic. In my experience, there's nothing quite like it. The Meridian 1700W stereo is exquisite – almost certainly the best car stereo you'll ever hear. My car's build quality is excellent. There's not a squeak or a rattle anywhere. Go and buy one."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ ENGINES

On the TDV6 and TDV8 diesels, the crankshaft is known to fail. Some last 20k miles, but some 200k, and owners recommend regular servicing and letting the car warm up before driving to help boost longevity.

■ ELECTRICS

There are a lot, they're all complicated and they're known to intermittently glitch out. From boot switch to brake light, nothing is immune from failure – although it's not a foregone conclusion. Gremlins can vary between a £20 switch and a far more expensive rewiring. Post-2016 cars are best.

■ GEARBOX

All versions use the eight-speed ZF unit. Owners recommend servicing every 50,000 miles to keep it in good health.

■ BODY

The Range Rover lettering on the bonnet is known to tarnish and Land Rover will charge £250 to fit new badges. Or you can do it yourself for £10.

Check absolutely everywhere for evidence of off-road knocks and parking dings – both likely.

■ CHASSIS

This is a heavy machine and that can take its toll on the suspension. Track control arms are a common fail point; budget £700, including labour, to replace.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

Trims run in ascending order from Vogue to Vogue SE, Autobiography and SV Autobiography. Westminster and Fifty were special editions that arrived towards the end.

All are well equipped and lots of Vogues had thousands of pounds of extra kit added to them to bring them above Autobiography cars. It's rare to find 19in wheels but they're the most comfortable; 20s and 21s are a good compromise but 22s are a little fidgety on the road for our liking.

There were three main updates for this generation: 2016 brought better infotainment tech, ULEZ compliance and improvements in reliability; 2018 was the big facelift and included the arrival of LED lights and three screens; 2021 introduced new 3.0-litre mild-hybrid straight sixes that are smoother and more economical than their predecessors (296bhp or 345bhp for the diesel and 395bhp for the petrol).

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£10,000-£17,999

Buy very carefully in this price bracket. Some cars have mega-miles (more than 200,000 – not necessarily a bad thing) while some will be lemons with temptingly low mileage.

£18,000-£29,999

Lots of high-spec, pre-facelift cars with reasonable miles and a good service history.

£30,000-£39,999

The sweet spot: low-mileage, pre-facelift cars with long warranties available here.

£40,000 AND ABOVE

Last-of-the-line, high-spec models. Specification has a bigger impact on value than the engine, which seems to make little difference.

ONE WE FOUND

RANGE ROVER 3.0 TDV6 VOGUE, 2018, 29,000 MILES, £34,990

What a lot of car for the money. This one has a lovely cream interior, burgundy paintwork and 20in wheels, plus a warranty, which is always welcome.

My car & I

If only I could find a higher-mileage one

Maximilian Chester's 1990 BMW Z1 is not a keeper. "I would prefer one with a higher mileage because I want to drive and enjoy the car more," he says. "For example, I'd have driven this one to the south of France a couple of times already but I'm reluctant to because much of its value is in its low mileage."

He's got a point. His Z1 has done only 4000 miles, making it desirable to a collector. He says: "It was a French press car, which, surprisingly, doesn't appear to have been used very much. It sold at auction with 250km on the clock and was then exported to the UK in 2018, where it was bought by racer and collector François Perrodo of Fanch Racing. One day last February, I was on Instagram when I saw it advertised for sale by the dealer Joe Macari. I had to have it!"

Maximilian will say only that he paid between £50,000 and £75,000 for the car but hopes to recoup close to the purchase price should something more suitable come his way. "I'll sell it if I find a cheaper one in similar condition and in the same colour but with a higher mileage. I bought it with 3000 miles and now it's showing only 4000 so hopefully it's still worth about what it was six months ago," he says.

Our cars

How to make a manifold difference to a Hillman Imp

BY MATT PRIOR

There is an expert in BMW engine swaps, of the kind I'm planning for my Hillman Imp, who said he was going to have a batch of exhaust manifolds made up for anyone currently doing a conversion.

I have a BMW K1100 inline four-cylinder engine and wiring loom ready for the swap but no 'zorst, so I said to count me in.

The thing is I've never met him, know of him only online, one of his social media accounts recently changed its name and he said "his mate Geoff" is making the exhaust.

I was, then, a bit concerned about sending him a deposit, so I asked to verify his identity via the good old-fashioned method of taking a random tin from the kitchen cupboard and taking a picture of it posed in front of his Hillman Imp.

A picture of him and his partner smiling with a loaf of bread and what looks like a ham with his Hillman duly arrived in my inbox. So I've forwarded him the money. The exhaust should take a few weeks, the ensuing engine swap quite a lot longer.

Prior's Imp is set to get that BMW four installed in its rear

Doors drop into the sills and the hood folds away neatly; engine is a 2.5 six-pot with 168bhp

Lemon trim is pristine but then it's had only 4000 miles of wear

> **"It's not very fast. That doesn't matter, though, since the Z1's appeal is in how it looks and feels"**

He'll be sorry to see it go. "I'd always wanted a Z1 and especially one like mine in Ur Green, also known as Primal Green, with contrasting lemon yellow interior," he says. "My pet hate is black cars and black interiors!"

Although Z1s were available in black, fortunately there were other colours more to Maximilian's taste, including the aforementioned green but also red, blue, yellow and violet. A glance at the classifieds reveals there are a few Z1s advertised in these colours. With around 60,000 miles, they're priced from £40,000 to £45,000. Most are being offered by continental sellers, although if Maximilian can get over his problem with black, there's a nice UK-registered example, also with 60,000 miles, for £35,000. Like all Z1s, it's left-hand drive and has a five-speed manual gearbox.

Apart from its doors, which famously slide down into the sills, the Z1 was also known for its plastic body panels, which BMW claimed could be removed in 40 minutes flat. Should you have wished to, you could drive the car without them, it said. The 2.5-litre straight-six engine, a unit it shared with the E30-generation 325i, produces 168bhp – not a lot by today's standards but, says Maximilian, the Z1 is more about being seen in than going quickly: "It's not very fast; my E38 740i is faster. It doesn't matter, though, since the Z1's appeal lies in its looks and how it feels on the road. Driving with the doors down is fun. People always ask where the doors are and will it pass an MOT. They're in the sills and, yes, it will."

When not required, the Z1's fabric roof folds away so neatly that it's difficult to believe it has one at all. "'What do you do when it rains?' is probably the third-most-common question I'm asked," says Maximilian. "I can understand. Unlike many other convertibles, when not in use the hood is very well integrated – and very watertight."

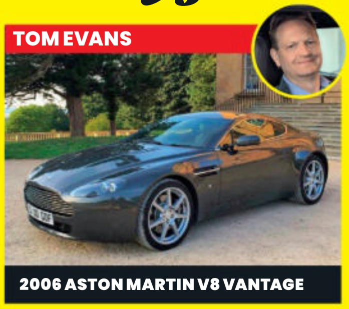
JOHN EVANS

Head to head

MURRAY SCULLION

2002 BMW M5

VS



TOM EVANS

2006 ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE

Find a manual V8 that's sure to appreciate in the next five years for under £35,000

MSc V8 M5 BMW. Need I say more? I probably should. It's unmodified, which is a huge bonus – and the ideal thing to buy, use as a second car and sell on for a small profit.

TE Well, that's all very interesting, but £29,995? Doesn't leave much room for upside. Meanwhile, I've saved £10k – which might come in handy for tyres and juice, it's true – and discovered this lovely Aston Martin V8 Vantage with just 77k miles on the clock for £19,995.

MSc That is absolutely stunning. But Astons give me the fear. I've seen prices from some independent specialists and the starting figures are astronomical. Also, a slight whiff of middle-aged man trying to be James Bond.

TE Well, if the cap fits… Besides, 007 never drove one of these and, in any case, I reckon it looks as good today as it did when it came out of the factory in 2006.

MSc The house that Aston's parked in front of in the ad photos… It's perhaps too grand to be the owner's actual gaff. Never a good sign in my eyes. But I'll admit I think the potential for investment is better for the Aston. My M5 is perhaps just a bit too much money. But, man, I love that Estoril Blue.

TE Thanks for my inevitable victory.

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

LOTUS ELAN 1.6 S2 LIMITED EDITION

1994, 100,000 miles, £11,999

Many purists were put off by the front-driven layout when it was new. But Lotus's handling nous made it accomplished on the right B-road. This one has done plenty of miles but looks to be in great condition.

AUDI RS4 AVANT 4.2 QUATTRO

2006, 66,000 miles, £28,977

If you'd prefer your manual V8 to come from Ingolstadt instead of Munich or Gaydon (see Head to Head), this immaculate RS4 Avant should serve you well. The grey leather interior of this one sets it apart in the classifieds. It has a full Audi service history and just two previous owners.

FORD ESCORT MEXICO

1973, 33,000 miles, £60,000

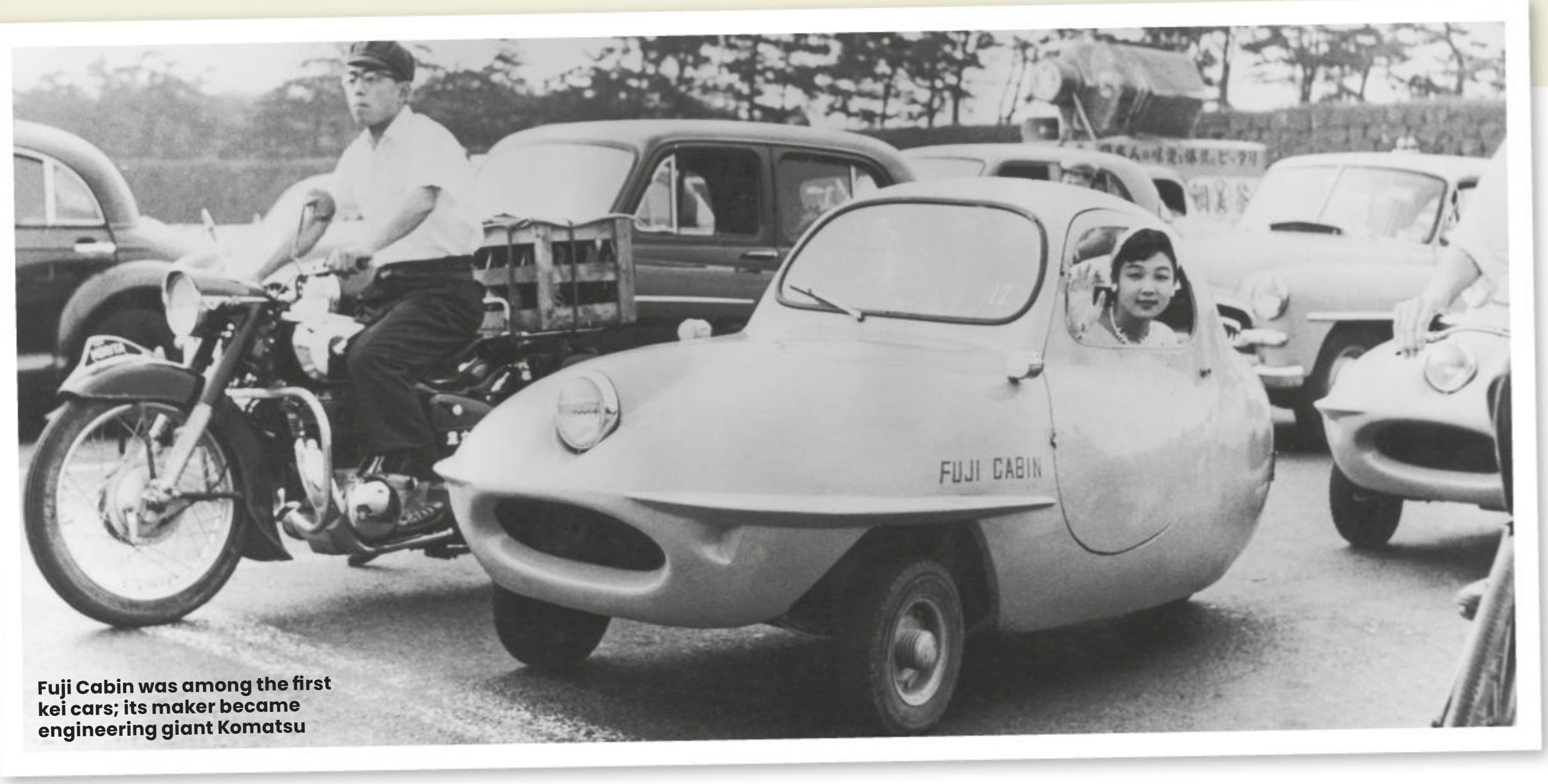
Rare fast Fords are incredibly sought after now, hence this low-mileage Mexico's price. It comes with an extensive history file and is said to run very well. It's been upgraded with engine tweaks, central locking and an immobiliser.

MAZDA RX-8

2006, 35,000 miles, £4290

The RX-8 is a brilliant four-seat sports car that's quick, good looking and affordable. But the rotary mill needs meticulous maintenance so regular servicing is a must. This low-mileage one is great value.

The Autocar Lost in the archive



Fuji Cabin was among the first kei cars; its maker became engineering giant Komatsu

The genesis of Japan's miniature kei cars

The EU's leaders recently accepted an industry proposal for a new class of small, low-cost cars as European manufacturers struggle to remain competitive while being forced into electrification. Named E-car, this takes inspiration from Japan's thriving kei jidosha ('light vehicle') class, which arose from a very different scenario in 1949.

Pre-war Japan lagged far behind Western nations in its motorisation, but it did produce vehicles – albeit predominantly motorbikes and three-wheeled trucks, of which annual production peaked at just 15,000. The default transport for commerce remained ox-drawn carts; for individuals it had quickly become the bicycle. Japanese-built cars were expensive and few.

Under Allied occupation after losing World War II, Japan was prohibited from making cars – although it was hardly capable of doing so anyhow, its industrial base having been all but erased by years of ceaseless bombing.

Circumstances changed when combat broke out in Korea in 1948. This spurred the Allies to import greater quantities of heavy oil and iron ore to Japan, resulting in increased availability of the materials needed for vehicles. Then, in October 1949, the Japanese Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced a Basic Policy for the Automobile Industry, ending material rationing and encouraging corporate rationalisation.

A letter by a young Autocar reader from Yokohama, Isamu Uchiyama, captured why government help was needed: "Last amongst the war-torn countries to make a comeback in car engineering seems to be Japan. As a Japanese, I regret this 10-year lag, the reasons for which are familiar: lack of inventive talent, inexperienced technique and inferior raw materials. Even if a designer conceived an ideal model, factory equipment is not up to its production. Yet Japan is a car country, for traffic conditions today are heavier than ever before."

Michio Suzuki (in suit) led his motorbike firm into kei market in 1955

1958 Subaru 360 popularised kei class

An amendment to Japan's vehicle regulations in 1949 then created a new category for cheap, light ('kei') vehicles. None were actually made to this specification, though – that happened after a 1950 amendment that distinguished between two-, three- and four-wheeled vehicles and significantly increased the maximum vehicle size to 3m long, 1.3m wide and 2.0m high, and a 1951 amendment that upped the maximum engine size to 360cc.

The very first kei car, then, came out in 1952: the Auto Sandal, a tiny two-seater built by pre-war three-wheeler specialist Nakano with a Mitsubishi engine.

Another pioneer – a less goofy-looking one – was the 1954 Flying Feather, designed by a former Datsun engineer and produced by Suminoe.

However, an unnoticeable 200 Sandals and 48 Feathers were sold over the next couple of years.

Real impetus came in May 1955: as part of governmental efforts to rebuild the Japanese economy in a new fashion, the Ministry of Trade and Industry announced the People's Car Development Network Plan. This called for a car with two or four seats; the ability to carry more than 100kg of luggage; a top speed above 62mph; 85mpg economy; an engine of 350-500cc; a kerb weight of 400kg; daily production of 2000; and a production cost below ¥150,000 (about £4800 in modern money).

Understandably, most firms considered this too tall an order, especially without any government subsidies for development. But one really rose to the challenge: Subaru, newly established from elements of the old Nakajima aircraft company.

We drove its 360 kei car in 1958, saying: "It has first-class suspension, which is commendably supple, yet the considerable wheel travel has entailed no sacrifices in stability and there is practically no roll. Its little engine is extremely smooth, by no means noisy and is very spirited." Our only criticism was the lack of a gearbox synchromesh, considering its buyers would be novice drivers.

That same year, the first true kei commercial vehicle also emerged – a van based on the Suzuki Suzulite.

The Subaru proved an immediate hit, and it and Suzuki's saloon were soon challenged by rivals from Mazda, Datsun and Mitsubishi, and consequently kei car sales ballooned from a mere 48 in 1955 and 1102 in 1958 to 77,632 in 1960.

And although they were rapidly outsold by 'proper' Japanese small cars, they remain an important and beloved feature of Japan to this day.

KRIS CULMER

If you want to get lost in the archive...
Scan the QR code to read our 1958 analysis of the Subaru 360 in full.

GETTY IMAGES

Thanks to Shohei Hakoda

ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.
⯪ Appalling. An emphatic failure.
★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.
★⯪ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.
★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.
★★⯪ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.
★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.
★★★⯪ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.
★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.
★★★★⯪ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.
★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

ABARTH

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Esseesse	★★★★☆	25.3.09	Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.	7.6	6.5	1135	35.8	-
500e Turismo	★★★⯪☆	9.8.23	A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.	6.9	6.4	1395	-	142
595 Competizione	★★★⯪☆	26.2.14	Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.	7.5	6.4	1135	39.2	-

ALFA ROMEO

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Giulia Quadrifoglio	★★★★⯪	29.3.17	Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.	4.5	3.2	1700	35.7	-
Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione	★★★⯪☆	3.1.18	Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements.	6.8	7.0	1815	49.7	-
Stelvio Quadrifoglio	★★★⯪☆	9.1.19	A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.	4.0	3.3	1931	31.9	-
Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD	★★★★☆	28.6.23	Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.	5.7	5.3	1784	32.2	-

ALPINE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A110 Première Edition	★★★★★	16.5.18	Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.	4.7	3.8	1125	45.6	-
A110 Légende GT	★★★★⯪	9.3.22	The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.	4.8	3.9	1140	40.2	-
A110 R	★★★⯪☆	15.11.23	Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.	4.2	3.5	1094	39.7	-

ARIEL

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atom 4	★★★★★	9.10.19	Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.	3.2	2.4	680	39.2	-

ASTON MARTIN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vantage	★★★★⯪	18.9.24	Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.	3.5	2.6	1745	28.5	-
DBS Superleggera	★★★★★	21.11.18	Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.	3.7	2.7	1910	25.6	-
Vanquish	★★★★⯪	26.3.25	Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.	3.1	2.3	1951	25.8	-
DBX 707	★★★★☆	30.11.22	A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.	3.3	2.8	2278	26.2	-

AUDI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition	★★★⯪☆	2.10.19	Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.	7.9	8.4	1209	57.0	-
S3 Sportback	★★★⯪☆	18.11.20	Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.	4.8	4.2	1552	39.0	-
RS3 Sportback Carbon Vorsprung	★★★★☆	9.7.25	Uber-A3 refuses to be defined just by its truly special five-cylinder engine.	3.6	3.3	1619	34.1	-
S5 Launch Edition	★★★★☆	15.1.25	Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.	4.1	3.8	2027	33.7	-
A6 E-Hybrid Launch Edition Quattro	★★★☆☆	1.10.25	Big executive saloon is spec-dependent – and misses its marks here.	5.8	5.2	2197	40.0	52
S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition	★★★⯪☆	16.4.25	Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character.	3.7	2.9	2346	2.8	256
RS6 Avant GT	★★★★☆	5.2.25	Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.	3.2	2.7	2144	26.3	-
A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport	★★★⯪☆	11.7.18	Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.	5.8	5.3	1880	53.1	-
A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport	★★★⯪☆	17.6.20	Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.	-	-	2330	-	-
E-tron 55 Quattro	★★★★⯪	26.6.19	A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.	5.4	4.2	2569	-	218
E-tron S Quattro	★★★⯪☆	2.6.21	A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.	4.2	3.6	2643	-	-
Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport	★★★⯪☆	9.11.16	Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.	8.1	8.2	1316	-	-
SQ2 Quattro S Tronic	★★★★☆	20.3.19	More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.	4.5	4.1	1530	34.5	-
Q4 E-tron 40 Sport	★★★⯪☆	7.7.21	Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.	8.1	7.8	2112	-	-
Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line	★★★⯪☆	14.5.25	Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward.	6.7	7.1	2072	42.6	-
Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1	★★★⯪☆	2.10.24	EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.	5.3	4.3	-	2.8	247
Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line	★★★★☆	12.8.15	Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive.	6.2	6.2	2245	-	-
SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro	★★★★⯪	26.10.16	A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.	5.1	4.5	2330	37.9	-
Q8 50 TDI S Line	★★★★☆	26.9.18	Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.	6.9	6.7	2285	40.1	-
R8 V10 Plus	★★★★☆	30.12.15	Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.	3.1	2.6	1730	-	-
S E-tron GT	★★★★☆	2.4.25	Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge.	3.1	2.4	2361	2.8	262

BENTLEY

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Bentayga W12	★★★★⯪	18.5.16	Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.	4.9	4.4	2440	-	-
Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline	★★★★☆	24.4.24	Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.	4.4	3.8	2600	25.6	-
Continental GT Speed	★★★★☆	22.12.21	Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.	3.4	2.7	2279	22.0	-
Continental GTC V8 S	★★★★⯪	19.4.23	Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.	3.6	3.2	2295	29.1	-
Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition	★★★★☆	16.4.25	Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better.	3.1	2.5	2462	28.0	47
Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner	★★★★⯪	17.8.22	Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.	4.4	3.9	2596	30.1	28

0–60mph 30–70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Flying Spur Speed First Edition ★★★★☆ 21.5.25
Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance.
3.2 2.7 2750 26.7 44

BMW

120 M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 31.12.24
Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.
7.3 6.8 1489 45.8 -

218i M Sport Gran Coupé ★★★☆☆ 8.4.20
Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.
8.8 8.4 1375 58.2 -

220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★☆ 1.6.22
A good coupé rather than a great sports car.
7.3 7.3 1546 46.8 -

M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★⯪ 12.7.23
Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.
4.5 3.8 1687 32.1 -

320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★ 15.5.19
BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.
6.9 6.8 1639 63.3 -

330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.20
An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.
5.5 5.2 1922 52.6 -

330e M Sport ★★★★⯪ 1.7.20
Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.
- - 1740 - -

M440i xDrive ★★★★☆ 6.1.21
A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.
4.1 3.7 1775 44.0 -

M4 Competition ★★★★⯪ 21.4.21
A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.
3.9 2.9 1800 32.7 -

M4 CS ★★★★☆ 23.4.25
Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify.
2.9 2.5 1747 32.4 -

i4 M50 ★★★★☆ 19.1.22
Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.
4.1 3.2 2248 - 186

M4 CSL ★★★★☆ 16.11.22
A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.
3.6 2.7 1625 31.1 -

M5 ★★★⯪☆ 29.1.25
A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.
3.5 2.8 2373 27.3 35

i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★⯪☆ 29.11.23
Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.
5.4 4.4 2213 - 235

550e xDrive M Sport Pro ★★★★☆ 3.4.24
Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.
4.4 3.5 2232 40.1 47

750e xDrive M Sport ★★★★⯪ 15.10.25
Look beyond its divisive design for a highly accomplished limousine.
4.8 4.2 2472 35.6 47

0–60mph 30–70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 15.2.23
It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.
4.5 3.4 2758 - 264

840d xDrive ★★★★☆ 16.1.19
A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.
5.0 4.6 1901 49.2 -

M8 Competition Convertible ★★★⯪☆ 5.2.20
Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.
3.3 2.7 2020 31.6 -

M8 Competition ★★★⯪☆ 3.6.20
Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.
- - 1960 - -

X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 25.1.23
A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.
6.4 6.0 1800 45.6 -

X4 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 13.11.19
Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.
4.0 3.3 2028 29.0 -

X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★☆ 2.1.19
Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.
6.6 6.6 2279 43.1 -

X6 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 20.3.24
Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.
3.5 3.1 2442 29.3 -

X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★☆ 29.3.23
Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.
4.2 3.7 2600 28.9 -

iX xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 9.7.25
Took the luxury EV to new heights in 2022 and nobody has caught up yet. Still great.
4.2 3.3 2637 2.7 314

XM 50e ★★★☆☆ 12.11.25
Succeeds neither as a driver's car nor as a luxury SUV.
5.0 4.4 2639 25.0 57

Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack ★★★★☆ 21.8.24
Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.
5.7 5.9 1561 36.9 -

BMW ALPINA

B3 GT Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.25
Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.
3.3 2.7 1910 29.4 -

B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★☆ 22.9.21
Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.
3.5 2.8 2100 - -

BYD

Dolphin Surf Boost ★★★★☆ 6.8.25
Efficient, well packaged and well priced. Its minor transgressions are forgivable.
12.0 13.0 1385 3.9 173

Atto 3 Design ★★★☆☆ 31.5.23
Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.
7.0 6.2 1787 - 201

Seal Design ★★★⯪☆ 17.1.24
Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.
5.8 4.7 2116 - 279

0–60mph 30–70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Sealion 7 Comfort ★★★☆☆ 5.11.25
Not quite the swish, advanced, sophisticated EV they would have you believe.
6.5 5.2 - 2.7 272

CATERHAM

Seven 160 ★★★★☆ 20.11.13
Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.
8.4 8.7 510 44.8 -

Seven 620S ★★★★⯪ 9.3.16
Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.
3.8 4.2 650 29.5 -

Seven 420 Cup ★★★★⯪ 31.8.22
Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.
4.2 3.4 560 35.3 -

CHEVROLET

Corvette 3LT ★★★★☆ 22.6.22
Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.
3.9 3.2 1679 32.9 -

Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★☆ 16.8.23
Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.
3.1 2.4 1670 26.1 -

CITROEN

Ami Colour ★★⯪☆☆ 11.1.23
Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.
- - 471 - 39

ë-C3 Max ★★★⯪☆ 30.4.25
Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money.
10.7 10.3 1479 2.8 -

C3 Aircross Hybrid 136 Max ★★★⯪☆ 22.10.25
Keenly priced and cleverly packaged – if you order with care.
9.3 8.6 1381 41.5 -

C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto ★★★☆☆ 26.5.21
Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.
9.5 9.2 1320 56.4 -

ë-C4 X Shine ★★★⯪☆ 3.5.23
EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.
9.7 8.8 1623 - 162

C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus ★★★⯪☆ 13.2.19
Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.
9.0 8.5 1540 47.8 -

C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus ★★★★☆ 28.9.22
Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.
7.8 7.1 1502 47.8 -

CUPRA

Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★⯪☆ 6.7.22
As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.
6.7 6.2 1794 - 220

Born VZ First Edition ★★★★☆ 9.10.24
An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.
5.4 4.2 1996 3.5 269

Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★☆ 8.9.21
Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.
4.9 4.3 1707 40.1 -

0–60mph 30–70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★☆ 27.7.22
Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.
5.9 4.7 1468 43.4 -

Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★⯪☆ 23.1.19
Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.
4.9 4.4 1615 36.7 -

Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG ★★★★⯪ 3.2.21
Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.
5.1 4.3 1583 36.4 -

Terramar 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 ★★★★☆ 18.6.25
Hottish cousin of the Volkswagen Tiguan is likeable but a bit too sensible.
5.6 5.1 1737 35.0 -

Tavascan V1 ★★★☆☆ 5.2.25
Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.
6.0 5.0 2129 3.2 246

DACIA

Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige ★★★★☆ 28.4.21
Compromised in surprisingly few areas.
11.9 11.9 1096 54.1 -

Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★⯪ 20.4.22
Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.
11.0 11.0 1267 48.5 -

Duster Hybrid 140 Journey ★★★★⯪ 27.11.24
Notably improved yet barely any pricier.
9.7 8.7 1413 40.2 -

Bigster Hybrid 155 Journey ★★★★☆ 11.6.25
Big Duster in name, big Duster in nature.
8.9 7.8 - 47.5 -

DS

3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige ★★★☆☆ 10.7.19
No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.
8.8 8.3 1205 48.6 -

4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+ ★★★⯪☆ 29.6.22
High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.
7.4 6.0 1706 44.7 26

7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige ★★★⯪☆ 19.9.18
DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.
8.6 7.0 1616 44.6 -

7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première ★★★⯪☆ 26.4.23
More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.
5.7 4.6 1956 36.6 29

9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus ★★★⯪☆ 2.2.22
Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.
8.6 7.1 1886 44.7 20

FERRARI

296 GTB ★★★★★ 21.12.22
Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.
2.7 1.9 1648 37.8 15

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
SF90 Stradale	★★★★☆	3.11.21	Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16
FIAT								
500 Twinair Lounge	★★★⯪☆	24.11.10	Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.	11.7	13.0	1070	42.1	-
500e 42kWh Icon	★★★★☆	26.1.22	More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.	8.1	7.7	1365	-	142
600e La Prima	★★★⯪☆	27.3.24	Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.	8.8	7.7	1587	-	173
FORD								
Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X	★★★★⯪	20.2.19	Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.	8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-
Focus ST	★★★★☆	11.9.19	Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.	6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium	★★★★⯪	25.3.20	The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.	10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma Gen-E Select	★★★★☆	4.6.25	Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class.	7.2	7.2	-	3.4	179
Puma ST	★★★★☆	24.3.21	Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.	7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD	★★★⯪☆	23.10.24	Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.	5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line	★★★⯪☆	24.6.20	Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.	-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD	★★★★☆	23.6.21	Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.	6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD	★★★☆☆	27.4.22	Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.	4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse	★★★⯪☆	20.11.24	Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.	4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium	★★★⯪☆	10.7.24	Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.	10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Tourneo Connect 1.5 Ecoboost PHEV Titanium	★★★⯪☆	2.7.25	PHEV power is a smart choice in this versatile, though expensive, utility MPV.	9.7	9.5	1876	40.3	64
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited	★★★★☆	8.5.24	Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.	12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak	★★★★⯪	14.6.23	Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.	9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-
GEELY								
EX5	★★☆☆☆	26.11.25	Chinese brand's first car in the UK is generally acceptable, but mostly mediocre transport.	7.4	5.9	-	2.9	195
GENESIS								
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line	★★★⯪☆	10.11.21	Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.	7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-
Electrified G80	★★★⯪☆	12.10.22	Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.	4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus	★★★★☆	24.8.22	Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.	3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater	★★★⯪☆	15.9.21	Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.	6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-
GWM								
Ora Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition	★★⯪☆☆	1.2.23	Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.	7.7	7.2	1580	-	154
HONDA								
E Advance	★★★⯪☆	26.8.20	More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.	7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX	★★★⯪☆	7.10.20	Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.	9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R	★★★★☆	10.9.25	Road-legal touring car vibe perfected. Sensational – if a little serious.	5.4	4.5	1417	37.4	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style	★★★⯪☆	24.11.21	Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.	9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance	★★★☆☆	1.11.23	EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.	8.6	6.9	1756	-	211
HYUNDAI								
i10 1.2 MPi Premium	★★★★☆	15.4.20	Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.	12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
Inster 49kWh Long Range 02	★★★⯪☆	24.9.25	Dinky looks but a surprisingly grown-up and versatile ownership experience.	9.6	8.8	-	3.3	179
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect	★★★⯪☆	24.2.21	Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.	9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N	★★★★⯪	25.8.21	N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.	6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate	★★★⯪☆	7.6.23	Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.	7.2	6.2	2006	-	272
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance	★★★★☆	6.9.23	Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.	10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium	★★★★☆	17.3.21	Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.	7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N	★★★★★	7.8.24	A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.	3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium	★★★★☆	16.10.24	A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.	7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo	★★★⯪☆	12.6.19	Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.	9.6	9.7	1852	-	-
INEOS								
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster	★★★⯪☆	20.9.23	Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.	8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-
ISUZU								
D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35	★★★☆☆	19.11.25	Noisy and slow but tough and ready for rough treatment.	10.5	11.9	2291	28.4	-
JAECOO								
7 SHS 2WD Luxury	★★⯪☆☆	9.4.25	Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.	7.3	6.4	1814	35.0	41
JAGUAR								
I-Pace EV400 S	★★★★⯪	12.9.18	Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.	4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★⯪	1.12.21	Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.	5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
JEEP								
Avenger Electric Summit	★★★⯪☆	24.1.24	Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.	8.3	6.9	1601	-	172
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★⯪☆	3.10.18	Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.	11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S	★★★☆☆	16.2.22	Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.	6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★⯪☆	28.10.15	Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.	10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk	★★★☆☆	30.6.21	Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.	6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland	★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-
KGM								
Torres 1.5T K40 AWD	★★⯪☆☆	4.6.25	Cheerful enough, although not as cheap or capable as we had hoped.	11.3	12.0	1661	35.0	-
KIA								
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★⯪☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-

TOP 3

BEST COMPANY CARS

1 Volkswagen ID 7

2 BMW 5 Series

3 Kia EV9

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

1991 SUBARU LEGACY 2.0 4CAM TURBO 4WD ESTATE

Rally-bred variant of new family car is the quickest estate we've ever tested. It's not perfect in every area, "but we can't help but like such an outrageously sporty estate, especially when it's priced so attractively".

Price £20,831
Engine 4 cyls horizontally opposed, 1994cc, petrol
Power 197bhp at 6000rpm
Torque 193lb ft at 3600rpm
Weight 1615kg
0-60mph 7.0sec
0-100mph 20.6sec
Top speed 134mph
Economy 21.8mpg

1980 MAZDA MONTROSE GLS COUPE

Second generation of Japanese firm's Ford Cortina-rivalling 626 loses rotary option and weirdly is renamed after Scottish town. Despite being a sporty-looking coupé version fitted with TWR extras, its handling is "nothing special" and it's slower than all of its rivals.

Price £6320
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1970cc, petrol
Power 90bhp at 4800rpm
Torque 114lb ft at 2500rpm
Weight 1286kg
0-60mph 12.9sec
0-90mph 36.6sec
Top speed 108mph
Economy 27.9mpg

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Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition	★★★½☆	20.11.19	Looks good and drives well yet lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban	★★★½☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling although it's not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★½☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was yet still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	-	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★½☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★½☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, although its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220

LAMBORGHINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Huracán Performante	★★★★½	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★½	20.5.20	Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★½	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-

LAND ROVER

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★½	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★½	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★½☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★½	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1	★★★★½	30.4.25	Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring.	4.6	3.7	2717	22.1	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★½	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★½☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★½	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-
Range Rover P550e Autobiography	★★★★☆	9.4.25	A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form.	4.9	4.0	2979	26.6	44

LEXUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★½☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, although not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★½☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★½☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★½☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-

LOTUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Emira V6 First Edition	★★★★½	2.4.25	The British sports car is alive, well and expensive.	4.4	4.0	1493	29.0	-
Emeya 600 GT	★★★★☆	28.5.25	A good electric saloon and a good Lotus.	4.1	2.8	2478	2.4	218
Eletre R	★★★½☆	24.7.24	There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216
Evija	★★★★☆	30.7.25	Mind-blowingly fast and intense, with some defining digital inhibitions.	2.8	1.9	1906	2.2	122

MASERATI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Grecale Trofeo	★★★½☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★½☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★½☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-

MAZDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★½☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★½☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★½	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-

McLAREN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
720S	★★★★★	24.5.17	Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-
750S	★★★★☆	19.6.24	McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.	2.9	2.0	1412	28.8	-
Artura	★★★★½	19.10.22	Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.	3.2	2.1	1552	32.9	17

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*For three weeks from publication date

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Artura Spider	★★★★⯪	6.11.24	Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.	3.1	2.2	1618	27.2	17
GT	★★★⯪☆	27.1.21	Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.	3.3	2.3	1580	34.2	

MERCEDES-AMG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A45 S 4Matic+ Plus	★★★★⯪	4.3.20	AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.	4.1	3.3	1661	41.5	-
C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate	★★★☆☆	31.7.24	Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.	3.3	2.8	2217	27.1	7.1
CLE 53 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus	★★★★☆	20.8.25	Appealing GT leaves something on the table.	3.9	3.5	2012	26.9	-
GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé	★★★★⯪	13.3.19	AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.	3.3	2.7	2135	30.1	-
GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé	★★★⯪☆	21.6.23	Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.	2.9	2.5	2339	23.9	6
EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition	★★★★☆	8.6.22	Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.	3.6	2.8	2673	-	259
S63 E Performance Night Edition	★★★★☆	2.10.24	Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.	3.5	2.7	2666	26.1	-
GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	14.10.20	Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.	5.4	4.9	2471	29.4	-
SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	26.7.23	Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.	3.5	2.8	1939	26.2	-
GT 43 Premium Coupé	★★★★☆	3.9.25	Less grunt with more grin for less outlay – but a rear-driven GT 55 would be better still.	4.5	3.7	-	36.6	-
GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé	★★★⯪☆	14.8.24	Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.	3.1	2.7	1972	30.7	-

MERCEDES-BENZ

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A200 AMG Line Executive	★★★★☆	24.5.23	Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.	7.8	7.3	1396	59.3	-
A250e AMG Line Premium	★★★☆☆	5.8.20	Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.	6.7	5.4	1665	57.8	-
B180 Sport	★★★★☆	3.4.19	In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.	8.4	8.3	1405	51.3	-
C300e AMG Line	★★★★⯪	4.5.22	Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.	5.8	5.1	2005	49.0	48
E220d AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	3.1.24	An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.	7.2	5.9	1917	65.8	-
E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus	★★★★⯪	19.3.25	Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.	4.9	4.3	2167	46.1	-
EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	4.1.23	Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.	6.0	5.5	2386	-	262
EQS 450+ Business Class	★★★★☆	7.5.25	Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV.	5.9	4.9	2608	2.6	248
EQS 450 Business Class SUV	★★★⯪☆	6.3.24	Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.	5.5	5.2	2899	-	265
S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive	★★★★⯪	6.4.22	Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.	5.2	4.2	2530	37.0	45
EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	17.11.21	Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.	8.4	7.6	2030	-	200
GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	16.9.20	Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.	7.4	7.1	1810	55.4	-
EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	18.5.22	A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.	7.7	6.8	2235	-	-
GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	13.9.23	Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.	6.5	6.0	1929	41.2	-
GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	12.2.20	Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.	6.5	6.0	2634	38.2	-
G350d AMG Line	★★★★☆	17.7.19	Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.	7.5	7.2	2451	31.3	-
G500 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	25.9.24	Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.	5.1	4.5	-	30.7	-
G580 with EQ Technology	★★★⯪☆	17.9.25	Electric G-Class has no true raison d'être but is still strangely compelling.	4.5	3.9	3140	1.6	209
CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.	6.1	5.5	2122	37.1	49

MG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★⯪☆	12.6.24	No bad vices but lacks a final layer of polish.	6.8	6.2	1311	47.9	-
4 EV Long Range SE	★★★★☆	5.4.23	Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.	7.1	6.1	1692	-	185
S5 EV Long Range Trophy	★★★★☆	23.7.25	It outstrips expectations for the money, except on range.	6.0	5.1	1723	3.3	217
ZS Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★☆☆	22.1.25	Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.	7.6	6.6	1422	41.5	-
IM6 100 Long Range	★★★⯪☆	29.10.25	Exceptional mixed with bland and irritating.	5.5	4.0	2340	3.0	299

MINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
John Cooper Works	★★★★☆	14.5.25	A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface.	5.8	4.5	1363	42.0	-
Countryman C Exclusive	★★★⯪☆	17.4.24	Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.	8.7	7.7	1618	46.9	-
Aceman SE Exclusive	★★★⯪☆	8.1.25	Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.	6.8	5.7	1756	3.1	162

MORGAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Plus Four	★★★⯪☆	12.8.20	Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.	5.1	4.3	1013	54.0	-
Supersport	★★★★☆	6.8.25	Quite plainly the most polished Morgan to date yet still charismatic.	3.8	3.1	1180	44.2	-
Super 3	★★★★⯪	9.11.22	Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.	6.9	5.9	644	43.5	-

NISSAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna	★★★⯪☆	29.1.20	Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.	11.9	11.8	1256	46.0	-
Qashqai E-Power Tekna+	★★★★☆	8.10.25	Hybrid SUV takes big strides, not least on real-world efficiency.	7.6	6.1	1681	48.8	-
Ariya 87kWh Evolve	★★★⯪☆	26.10.22	Surprisingly traditional and luxurious although not wholly successful.	8.2	6.4	2109	-	-
X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna	★★★★☆	22.2.23	Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.	6.6	6.0	1947	33.8	-

OMODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
5 1.6 TGDI Comfort	★★⯪☆☆	20.11.24	Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.	7.4	6.3	1474	38.2	-

PEUGEOT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-208 Allure Premium	★★★★☆	6.5.20	Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV.	-	-	1455	-	-
208 1.2 100PS Style	★★★☆☆	5.11.25	Stylish and efficient, but could be more memorable to drive – and ergonomic.	10.4	10.4	1122	51.3	-
308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT	★★★★☆	25.5.22	A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.	9.5	9.2	1358	55.3	-
408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8	★★★★☆	11.10.23	Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.	8.2	7.3	1746	42.1	40
508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto	★★★★☆	24.10.18	Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.	8.8	8.5	1671	52.0	-

TOP 3

FASTEST ROAD-LEGAL CARS

1 Koenigsegg Jesko Absolut

2 Yangwang U9 Xtreme

3 Bugatti Chiron Super Sport

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8	★★★★☆	8.7.20	This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.	-	-	1720	-	-
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE	★★★★☆	5.5.21	Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.	5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-
e-2008 GT Line	★★★½☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure	★★★½☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT	★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270	★★★½☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition	★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235
4 Long Range Single Motor	★★★☆☆	24.9.25	Electric crossover is desirable but something of a missed opportunity.	6.8	5.5	2246	2.5	310

TOP 3

BEST CARS ELIGIBLE FOR THE EV GRANT

1 Renault 5

2 Skoda Elroq

3 Alpine A290

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

PORSCHE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster	★★★★½	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S	★★★★½	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS	★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 Carrera S	★★★★½	3.9.25	Supercar quick but gloriously rounded with it.	3.0	2.5	1600	34.5	-
911 Carrera T	★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 Carrera GTS	★★★★½	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
911 Turbo S	★★★★½	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 GT3 PDK	★★★★½	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 GT3 RS	★★★★½	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar	★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T	★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
Macan Electric	★★★★☆	13.8.25	Well rounded in every sense and not without quietly executed driver appeal.	5.2	4.2	2262	3.0	219
Macan Turbo Electric	★★★½☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219
Cayenne S	★★★★½	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo	★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid	★★★½☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé	★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid	★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S	★★★★½	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

RENAULT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic	★★★★½	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
4 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic	★★★★☆	16.7.25	Charismatic but grown-up, the reborn 4 is a real contender.	8.2	7.5	1493	3.3	182
5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five	★★★★½	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Megane E-Tech Techno	★★★½☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC	★★★½☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition	★★★½☆	13.10.21	Eminently sensible but unspectacular.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range	★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine	★★★½☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost Series II Black Badge	★★★★½	25.6.25	Only flirts with sporting appeal, and gives up no Rolls accomplishments in doing so.	4.5	3.6	2576	25.8	-
Phantom	★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre	★★★★½	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge	★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★½	19.7.17	Shows rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR	★★★½☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG	★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort	★★★★½	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG	★★★½☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG	★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS	★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	-	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate	★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout	★★★½☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition	★★★★½	19.3.25	Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge	★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium	★★★½☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium	★★★½☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring	★★★½☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring	★★★½☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring	★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★½	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TESLA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Long Range	★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive	★★★★☆	27.8.25	Evolution keeps Model Y nicely on the boil – for now.	5.7	4.3	1903	3.2	315
Model S Plaid	★★★½☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D	★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition	★★★½☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design	★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack	★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports	★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
Prius Plug-in Design	★★★★☆	23.4.25	Better late than never for best Prius to date.	6.6	5.6	1542	56.1	46
bZ4X AWD Vision	★★★½☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible	★★★★☆	21.5.25	Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability.	10.3	10.3	2503	30.7	-
Mirai Design Premium	★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro	★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport	★★★½☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto	★★★½☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line	★★★½☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite	★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto	★★★½☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland Hybrid GS	★★★½☆	27.8.25	Spacious, functional, efficient and good value, yet neither grand nor lovely.	9.8	9.3	1623	52.2	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy	★★★½☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE	★★★★½	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+	★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG	★★★★½	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style	★★★★½	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI	★★★½☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	-	47.2	-
Golf R	★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life	★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake	★★★½☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match	★★★★½	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
ID 7 GTX Tourer	★★★☆☆	13.8.25	Sporty electric estate is appealing but not the product the GTX brand needs.	5.3	4.6	2353	2.9	241
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG	★★★★½	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG	★★½☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line	★★★½☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max	★★★½☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech	★★★½☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance	★★★½☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG	★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style	★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro	★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600	★★★½☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB	★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sibling car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus	★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate	★★★½☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition	★★★★½	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger siblings, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 T8 Ultra	★★★½☆	15.10.25	Volvo's crowd pleaser is still classy and spacious, though far from cutting edge.	4.6	4.1	2145	34.3	40
XC90 B5 AWD Ultra Bright	★★★½☆	2.7.25	Still a mature, versatile and wilfully unspectacular choice.	8.0	7.5	2117	37.0	-
EX90 Twin Motor AWD Ultra	★★★½☆	26.11.25	Made of the right stuff. Needs improved range and charging to justify its price.	5.6	4.7	2770	2.2	278
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Bentley Continental Supersports March 2026
Lightened, rear-wheel-drive V8 GT with 657bhp and 590lb ft.

BYD Seal 06 Late 2025
Executive saloon/estate arrives as a plug-in hybrid with more than 50 miles of electric range.

Alpine A390 Spring 2026
Porsche Macan Electric rival gets 464bhp and four-wheel drive from a trio of motors.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love... POWERSLIDING

BY STEVE CROPLEY

Let's get one thing straight (or not): loving power oversteer doesn't make you good at it. In fact, what makes this special cornering condition so great is knowing it's something you will only sometimes get right. It can only be achieved reliably, after practice, by an expert in the right car.

Let me define my kind of power oversteer. I'm not talking here about the special sport of drifting: that's a different thing. Skilful, for sure, but its object is to produce lurid clouds of smoke, slowly and in an exaggerated attitude that has little to do with cornering speed. The cars' engines, traction systems, differentials and suspension set-ups are all uniquely configured in a purpose-built drift car that has nothing to do with circuit racing.

My version involves the use of oversteer as a tool for fast cornering; a means of getting a car quickly and neatly around a corner. It's the sort of thing you see in 10,000 rally videos or (in my case) in those old-time movies of Jim Clark and drivers of his ilk powersliding their Lotus Cortinas at racing speeds to beat the mighty Jaguars and V8 Fords around Brands Hatch or Crystal Palace.

Ideally, it means that somewhere near a corner's apex, the car assumes the new direction it will need for the straight that's coming – under full control – and is then encouraged to stop sliding dead at precisely the ideal to bolt down the following straight or to be flicked the other way for an S-bend.

My preference is for the powerslides to be precise and relatively narrow, rather than the arms-and-elbows exercise practised on zero-grip skidpans. In my book, powersliding (in the right car) is an aid to cornering, not a party trick.

Seven will teach you fundamentals of car control under power

Jim Clark: Cropley's hero and a master of sliding through turns

> **"In my book, it's an aid to cornering, not a party trick"**

Some cars are much easier to slide than others. Powerful front-engined, rear-driven cars have a big advantage, because their poke can be used easily to overpower the cornering grip of the rear wheels while the front wheels are still obediently holding their line. The challenge then is to control the slide, neither allowing the tail to step out too far (which makes you slow and untidy) nor letting it stop sliding too soon, requiring an untidy and slow recovery.

The latter effect is a particular danger for rally drivers: if an oversteering car stops sliding too soon in a long, fast corner, it can grip suddenly and flick the car off the outside of a corner before there's time to recover, taking it over a drop or into the trees – or both. There are videos.

Among affordable road cars, the Caterham Seven is a means of sampling and honing powersliding skills – which is why large car parks with lots of cones are often used for what are erroneously called 'drift schools'. The aim is to show how power oversteer can be used to manoeuvre a car precisely into tight spaces. They soon show you that just as important as learning how to break the car's rear away is judging exactly where it will stop sliding. If you get the chance to try, don't miss out.

What we did this week

HAM SANDWICH – DON'T CUT

How many cafes do you know where you can gawp at a pristine Mk2 Ford Escort rally car while you wait for your lunch? The fabulous new branch of Baffle Haus in South Wales has just that, not to mention some great flatbreads. With events for both car and bike enthusiasts, it's well worth a lunch stop. **JACK HARRISON**

YOU CAN'T PARK THERE SIR.

FROM A MINT AERO TO Z CARS

On holiday in Prague, I made a beeline for the National Technical Museum – and left with a new admiration for the significance of old Czech engineering. Among the towering steam locos, various aircraft and endless motorcycles was a cohort of cars not just from Skoda and Tatra but also various unfamiliar firms: Aero, Wikov, Walter, Praga, Jawa (what an adorable little coupé) and Z. Best brand name ever, that. **KRIS CULMER**

HIS CUP OF TT

Audi design boss Massimo Frascella is known for his love of the TT. That was demonstrated no more clearly than at Audi's glitzy F1 livery reveal (p50), where he eschewed a ride to the red carpet in a Group B Quattro to instead arrive in the coupé. Classy. **CHARLIE MARTIN**

4 PINTS
THE NIGHT
BEFORE

One in five drink drive prosecutions happen the morning after[A], many unaware they still have alcohol left in their system from the night before. AlcoSense quickly and accurately tells you your blood alcohol level, so you don't become one of them.

The Telegraph

"a fresh level of accuracy in consumer breath testing"[B]

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